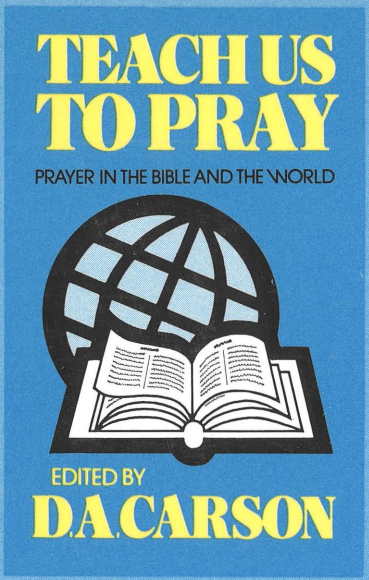
TEACH US TO PRAY

PRAYER IN THE BIBLE AND THE WORLD

EDITED BY

D.A.CARSON



In almost 500 years of evangelical praying, there has never been a book like this. "Teach Us to Pray" is in effect four books in one. It begins with a detailed analysis of the biblical theology of prayer, surveying each part of the Scriptures in turn. Next comes an investigation of prayer and spirituality within Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, historic Christianity (Puritanism) and a different Christian contemporary tradition (Roman Catholicism). In addition, expert commentators offer "Lessons in Prayer from the Worldwide Church", featuring Korea, China, Latin America and Africa. Finally a group of Christian leaders write about prayer in their individual experience, adding a personal dimension to this comprehensive book. This is a full library on the subject of prayer, conserving the best insights of the past and breaking new ground with penetrating original thinking.

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BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION AND THE CHURCH:
Text and Context

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An International Study

TEACH US TO PRAY

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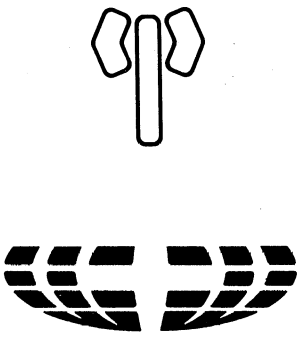

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Preface

This is the third volume to be produced by the Faith and Church Study Unit of the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship. The first two (also published by The Paternoster Press and Baker Book House) dealt respectively with hermeneutical issues relating to the doctrine of the church (*Biblical Interpretation and the Church*), and with the doctrine itself (*The Church in the Bible and the World: An International Study*).

As was the case with the first two volumes, so also the preparation of this one proceeded according to a set plan. Members of the Study Unit agreed to contribute essays on the subjects represented by the chapters in this book, and then meet together to go over the results. The papers were circulated, and the meeting took place in November 1986. Discussion and mutual criticism were interspersed with sustained periods of prayer. Detailed notes of the discussions were kept, and summaries went out to each contributor. The papers were eventually revised and returned to me, some as early as the Spring of 1987, others not until the Spring of 1988. The papers were then edited and prepared for the press.

For various reasons, three contributors were unable to attend the meeting: Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali, Dr Tite Tiénou and Mr David Wang. Some contributors wrote under exceedingly difficult conditions. Eight of us are not living in the land of our birth. Special thanks go to Dr David Peterson, who undertook two chapters in the book. Although notes of personal thanks to individual members of the Study Unit might be invidious, since all contributed considerable time and energy to the project, I cannot fail to mention three or four members who were especially diligent in sending in written critiques of the various papers, and in offering many useful suggestions for the improvement of the work.

The meeting in November 1986 again took place in Cambridge, England, in the excellent facilities of Tyndale House, so generously put at our disposal. Members and friends of Eden Baptist Church provided most of the hospitality, and one of the elders, Mr Stan Blake, saw to the logistics. Without their help, the convening of this Study Unit would have been much less joyful a task than it was.

At this writing, the projected topics for the next two meetings of the Study Unit, slated, respectively, for November 1988 and November 1990, are 'Justification' and 'Worship'.

Once again it should be made clear that any profits from the three books in this series will be put aside to facilitate the translation and publication of any part of these books in areas of the world where the church has little money. Applications from recognised Christian institutions may be made in the first instance to the Publications Working Group of the World Evangelical Fellowship.

I cannot too strongly stress that the earnest desire of all who so kindly contributed to this volume is that these essays should prove more than a Christian theology of prayer, more indeed than an attempt to understand Christian prayer within the framework of a world-wide debate on the meaning of 'spirituality'. Certainly this book attempts to take the first steps toward a theology of prayer; certainly it seeks to engage other perspectives firmly and courteously. But our intention is that it should also serve as a call to pray. For what good is yet more talking and writing about prayer, if there is not more and better praying?

Soli Deo gloria.

D. A. CARSON

Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ARV	American Revised Version
ASV	American Standard Version
AV	Authorised Version
BAGD	Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*
Bib	*Biblica*
BibSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BR	*Biblical Research*
BT	*Banner of Truth Magazine*
CBFMS	Conservative Baptist Foreign Missions Society
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CT	*Christianity Today*
CTR	*Criswell Theological Review*
ERT	*Evangelical Review of Theology*
ET	English Translation
ETL	*Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*
EvTh	*Evangelische Theologie*
ExpTim	*Expository Times*
GNB	Good News Bible
IBD	*Illustrated Bible Dictionary*
IBMR	*International Bulletin of Missionary Research*
ICC	International Critical Commentaries
Int	*Interpretation*
ISBT	*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Revised)
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
MK	Meyer Kommentar
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NCB	New Century Bible

NEB	New English Bible
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIDNTT	*New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIV	New International Version
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NTT	*Nederlandsch Theologisch Tijdschrift*
OudStud	*Oudtestamentische Studien*
par(s).	and parallel(s)
PTR	*Princeton Theological Review*
RB	*Revue Biblique*
RSV	Revised Standard Version
RTR	*Reformed Theological Review*
RV	Revised Version
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
SuppNovT	Supplements to *Novum Testamentum*
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
Theol	*Theology*
TLZ	*Theologische Literaturzeitung*
TZ	*Theologische Zeitschrift*
VE	*Vox Evangelica*
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WCC	World Council of Churches
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neuestamentliche Wissenschaft*

1

Learning to Pray

D. A. CARSON

One of the most startling truths about prayer is this: prayer can be taught and learnt. Once the disciples have enjoyed the opportunity to observe Jesus at prayer, they ask him to teach them how to pray, as John the Baptist once taught his disciples to pray. The Master does not rebuke them for their impertinence; still less does he deride the *naïveté* that dares to think prayer can be taught. Instead, he provides them with a model prayer, designed less as a piece of ecclesiastical liturgy than as a teaching device to foster their own praying and provide them with a standard (Luke 11:1ff.).

In this light, one of the more useful things we might have attempted is a systematic and practical exposition of all the prayers (or at least the major ones) found in the Scripture. If the Word of God is to reform our lives, it should also reform our prayers. All that is important about prayers can be found in the prayers of Scripture: appropriate petitions, the ground for approaching God, the kind of reasoning that is used, the mix of petition, praise, intercession, adoration, the variety of human contexts and postures, the range of emotions, the nature of fervency, the connections between prayer and faith, and much more. But others have attempted such expositions, and it seemed better in this book to focus on the *theology* of prayer — that is, not only on the biblical prayers themselves, but on the connections between their immediate meaning and the rest of the revelation of God in the Bible. To be sure, this ensures that there will be some close study of certain prayers. But there will be something else: an attempt to understand these prayers in the contexts in which they are found, and to link these findings together. What place does prayer have in the Old Testament narrative? In the writings of, say, Paul? And how should these various strands be woven together into a synthesis that is faithful to the Bible and comprehensive enough to lend insight and power? How should praying, distinctively Christian praying, be tied to a robust Trinitarian faith?

These are the kinds of questions addressed in chaps. 2–8 of this book, culminating in the synthesis of Edmund Clowney. Thought there is in these chapters an implicit (and sometimes explicit) call to prayer, that call does not turn on energetic manipulation, but on the power of models and on exposure to biblical truth that will automatically prove attractive and compelling to every Christian who wants to grow in holiness and (however imperfectly) to think God's thoughts after him.

One cannot long discuss prayer without probing the much larger and currently popular subject of spirituality. But 'spirituality' turns out to be a notoriously slippery word. The government of the Republic of China can speak quite eloquently of 'spiritual culture', but 'spiritual' in such a context has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit, nor with the Bible, but with psychological well-being and aesthetic values. Even if we restrict ourselves to the dominant world religions, 'spirituality' turns out on inspection to mean very different things in different contexts. To some, it has to do with an ill-defined but intense mysticism; to others, it is bound up with the pursuit of transcendence in a monistic universe where God and the creation cannot be differentiated; to still others, it is a state of mental dissociation achieved by breathing and other ritualistic disciplines that have gained religious value.

But if prayer cannot be discussed at much depth without probing spirituality, it becomes important to state what is distinctive about biblical notions of spirituality. In the present work, this is attempted by frank, courteous attempts to outline the meaning of 'spirituality' in various world religions. Because a non-Christian religion may operate out of a world-view diametrically opposed to our own (*e.g.* Buddhism), or may be enormously diverse and syncretistic (*e.g.* Hinduism), contributors have on occasion gone out of their way to work with definitions of 'spirituality' that are far removed from decisively Christian approaches. This flexibility is meant to be heuristic: it is more than mere courtesy, it is an honest attempt to read other religions on their own terms, and to discover in them what is well preserved of God's general revelation, even if as Christians we find we must return again and again to Jesus Christ as the touchstone of authentic spirituality.

But some readers who may sympathise with treatments of Buddhism. Hinduism and Islam may be offended by our decision to include an Evangelical evaluation of the spirituality of Roman Catholicism. We offer no apology. Very often it is those closest to us who must (both for their sake and ours) be most sharply differentiated from us. More important, contemporary Roman Catholicism is extraordinarily diverse. Members of the World Evangelical Fellowship, the organisation that has sponsored this study, are found in most countries of the world, and their experience of Roman Catholicism is highly diverse. But it would be highly irresponsible to fail to respond to those forms of Catholicism that tend to predominate when Catholicism is (at least nominally) the primary agent in shaping the entire culture in which the Evangelical finds himself. The assessment offered by Emilio Núñez of Catholicism's approach to spirituality is decisively shaped by current realities in Latin America; Christians living in India will see things a bit differently. Meanwhile the dominant ecclesiastical voices of the Roman Church in the USA and in Holland bear closest resemblance to classic liberal Protestantism.

There is still another reason for including this chapter. Evangelicalism in much of the world is going through a process of fragmentation that is rapidly losing a spirituality based on the Word. The Word has been so poorly handled, and societal and ecclesiastical pressures have been so strong, that many who wrap themselves in the term 'Evangelical' have chosen to pursue a spirituality of aesthetics, a spirituality of experience, a spirituality of liturgy, a spirituality of mysticism. There is much to be learned from all of these traditions; there is even more to be lost by abandoning what I have called a

spirituality of the Word. If this essay helps to focus some of these points for a few readers, its inclusion is fully warranted.

If Christian prayer and spirituality can be sharpened up by thinking through what it is not, it is more greatly enriched by tapping the resources and experience of the church world-wide. Chapters 13 through 16 attempt to summarise some of the lessons that can be learnt from the prayer habits of the church in parts of the world not all that familiar to many readers of this book. The volume and vitality of prayer in places where the church has had to struggle for existence is a damning indictment of the relative prayerlessness in large swathes of the Western church. But that does not mean there are no dangers or aberrations in the prayer movements that have sprung up in many countries, and contributors have usually proved sufficiently dispassionate, self-critical and frankly biblical to isolate these for us.

In some parts of the world the church is relatively young. In others, including most Western countries, it has a long history. In an attempt to draw something of value from the Western tradition, it was felt that the wisest course would be to tap that tradition at its strength. That meant a distinctly historical paper, for prayer and biblically-informed spirituality are not strong suits of the modern church in the West. But this has proved an advantage: it provides a reason for incorporating in this book some of the findings of Roy Williams on the Puritans, that much maligned group of Christians who above all things were characterised by the desire not only to know the Word of God but to do it, not only to study the Word of God but to apply it to all of life and thought. It is hard to read this chapter without repenting before God for the carelessness and apathy that have squandered so rich a heritage of prayer, of experiential knowledge of God.

Finally, the last three essays in the book are frankly and immediately pastoral. The first addresses the place of prayer in the training of Christian leaders. The last two are moving instances of spiritually-minded self-disclosure — testimonies if you like. If we learn to pray by studying the prayers of Scripture and by seeking to emulate them, we may also learn to pray by listening to senior Christians who have been praying for many years. Paul can exhort young Christians to imitate him, because he imitates Christ. If we learn lessons in prayer from those who have learned to pray in accordance with the Word of God, we shall not go far wrong. And if these last three essays required the least amount of research, they doubtless required the greatest amount of candour and spiritual maturity. The editor joins all subsequent readers of these chapters in profound gratitude.

PART ONE

Biblical Theology of Prayer

2

Prayer in the Old Testament Outside the Psalms

HOWARD PESKETT

I WHAT IS PRAYER IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?

We begin our consideration of the topic with a series of vignettes or snapshots of Old Testament incidents which reveal to us the reality and dimensions of prayer. Prayer takes us into the presence of the personal, sovereign, covenant God. It exposes our real theology, our real priorities. The series is only a selection of some outstanding Old Testament incidents; the reader will, no doubt, wish to add others from his or her own study.

Prayer is Abraham, on the escarpment overlooking the Dead Sea, engaged in animated conversation with the LORD about the impending destruction of Sodom. Did he stop too soon? For only Lot and his daughters were saved.

Prayer is Jacob in a desperate midnight struggle from which he emerges physically maimed but spiritually victorious, a lame but new man.

Prayer is Moses the mediator expostulating with God and pleading for his people when their stubborn rebelliousness brings them under the dangerous overhang of God's judgment. We see Moses' astonishing selflessness and read the amazing statement that 'the LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend.'

Prayer is Gideon (the least member of his family, from the weakest clan in Manasseh) asking God — twice — for a sign that he was really going to use him to rescue Israel.

Prayer is Hannah crying bitterly and in such deep distress that the priest Eli thought she had drunkenly lost control of herself. Her desperate prayer was answered, and how jubilant was her thanks-giving song!

Prayer is David, firmly established as king at last, secure on his throne, with peace round about, the recipient of wonderful dynastic promises. And what is his response? Astonished gratitude to a unique and sovereign God. God had promised to make *David's* name great, but David's prayer is that *God's* name will be exalted.

Prayer is Solomon kneeling before the altar in the completed temple, with his hands spread out towards heaven. He is aware that the largest sky cannot contain the Lord, yet he begs the Lord to draw near to his people for his Name's sake.

Prayer is Elijah on Mount Carmel, after several thousand people had watched the prophets of Baal raving to their gods for several hours. Then

Elijah orders his sacrifice to be drenched with water and asks God to make his fire fall — 'so that these people will know that you, O LORD, are God . . .' After this astonishing victory King Ahab goes off to feast but Elijah goes back up the mountain and puts his face between his knees.

Prayer is Hezekiah, king of a small kingdom, receiving a bullying letter from the king of Assyria advising him to surrender. He spreads it out before the Lord and receives an overwhelming answer. Later, in a time of personal illness, he is privileged to receive a miraculous sign of his recovery.

Prayer is King Jehoshaphat marching into battle against foreign hordes with the vanguard singing, 'Give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures forever.'

Prayer is Ezra sitting appalled until the time of the evening sacrifice and then, with torn tunic and cloak, falling on his knees before the Lord and asking for mercy for his faithless people.

Prayer is a concourse of Israelites in Nehemiah's time, fasting, wearing sackcloth and with dust on their heads, spending a quarter of a day reading the law and a quarter of the day in confession and worship, reviewing their history, stained as it was with disobedience, praying for mercy and renewing their pledge of loyalty.

Prayer is Isaiah, lifting his eyes to God from the standpoint of the Jewish exiles and protesting: 'Where are your zeal and your might? Your tenderness and compassion are withheld from us', pleading: 'Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down . . . Do not be angry beyond measure, O LORD.'

Prayer is Daniel, already for many decades a king's advisor, faced by yet another plot against him by jealous court underlings, imperturbably continuing his habit of praying three times daily. The book of Daniel also records his prayer for his people, offered with fasting, in sackcloth and ashes, and ending with the rousing words:

> O LORD, listen!
> O LORD, forgive!
> O LORD, hear and act!
> For your sake, O my God, do not delay . . .

Prayer is Jonah (from what must surely be the oddest place from which prayer was ever made!) celebrating God's extraordinary mercy in saving his life and finishing with thanksgiving and a promise to fulfil his vows. The book also honestly records Jonah's disgust with God for extending his mercy to the Ninevites.

Prayer is Habakkuk, in a country overrun by godless, foreign armies, singing to himself the story of the Exodus, praying for God to act in such a wonderful way again, and making the matchless commitment:

> Though the fig tree does not bud
> and there are no grapes on the vines,
> though the olive crop fails
> and the fields produce no food,
> though there are no sheep in the pen
> and no cattle in the stalls,
> yet I will rejoice in the LORD,
> I will be joyful in God my Saviour.

Prayer is Job in his anguish thinking the unthinkable, expressing the inexpressible, accusing God, asserting his integrity, crying for a mediator.

Prayer is Jeremiah, called against his will to be a prophet, living between the times of God's decree of judgment and its execution, forbidden to intercede for a people who had crossed

> . . . the line, by eye unseen,
> across the trifler's path
> which is the boundary between
> God's mercy and His wrath.

In this volcanic situation Jeremiah's prayers pour out white-hot: exquisite love and intolerable pain.

Here are these eighteen passages in tabular form:

1.	*Abraham*	Genesis 18:16–33
2.	*Jacob at Peniel*	Genesis 32:22–32
3.	*Moses*	Exodus 32:1–34:9
4.	*Gideon*	Judges 6
5.	*Hannah*	1 Samuel 1
6.	*David*	2 Samuel 7:18–29 = 1 Chronicles 17:16–27
7.	*Solomon*	1 Kings 8:22–9:9 = 2 Chronicles 6:12–7:22
8.	*Elijah*	1 Kings 18
9.	*Hezekiah*	2 Kings 19,20
10.	*Jehoshaphat*	2 Chronicles 20
11.	*Ezra*	Ezra 9:5–10:1
12.	*Nehemiah*	Nehemiah 9:1–37
13.	*Isaiah*	Isaiah 63:7–64:12
14.	*Daniel*	Daniel 6:7–14; 9:1–23
15.	*Jonah*	Jonah 2:1–9; 4
16.	*Habakkuk*	Habakkuk 3
17.	*Job*	
18.	*Jeremiah*	Jeremiah 10:23–25; 15:15–18; 18:19–23; 20:7–18.

In the fulness of time God revealed himself to us more deeply and widely than to these Old Testament saints, in the person of his Son, our Mediator and Redeemer. Nevertheless one must rise up and salute these people of the old covenant who knew God so intimately and dealt with him so directly and honestly.

We can construct from the examples above a summary of the main types of prayer as follows:

A.	*Prayers of thanksgiving* (Nos. 6,7)		
B.	*Prayers of petition,* including		
	(i)	Confession	(Nos. 11,12,14)
	(ii)	Intercession for others	(Nos. 1,3)
	(iii)	Prayers in times of personal crisis	(Nos. 2,4,5,15,17,18)
	(iv)	Prayers in times of national crisis	(Nos. 8,9,10)
	(v)	Prayers for revival	(Nos. 13,16)

Further analysis of the types of prayer follows later in this chapter and in other chapters of this volume.

II. SIXTEEN MORAL IMPERATIVES IN OLD TESTAMENT PRAYER

First, three striking passages as headlines:

> Seek the LORD while he may be found;
> call on him while he is near.
> Let the wicked forsake his way
> and the evil man his thoughts.
> Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him,
> and to our God, for he will freely pardon.
> For my thoughts are not your thoughts
> neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.
>
> (*Isaiah 55:6–8*)

> This is what the LORD says:
> Call to me and I will answer you
> and tell you great and unsearchable
> things you do not know.
>
> (*Jeremiah 33:3*)

> . . .as for me, I keep watch for the LORD,
> I wait in hope for God my Saviour;
> my God will hear me.
>
> (*Micah 7:7*)

A. Prayer is not restricted to an élite.

There is a danger that we may look upon prayer as the prerogative of the great saints of God, in a way that discourages us from following their example. We must also note that in Old Testament times the design of tabernacle and temple, the institution of priests and prophets and the teaching about God's holiness combined to remind people that there is a certain *distance* between a holy God and sinners. The veil in the temple reminded men of the *in*accessibility of God and the need for mediation.

Nevertheless the Old Testament records many instances of ordinary people at prayer: Abraham's unnamed servant in Genesis 24 (presumably Eliezer of Damascus — cf. Genesis 15:2) prays a simple prayer for success in finding a wife for Isaac and asks for a sign, which is given. The chapter also records his delighted gratitude to God on the success of his mission. Tucked away in the graveyard of 1 Chronicles 1–9 is the 35-word story of Jabez whose ambitious prayer was granted, and that is all we know about him. Judges 13 tells the story of the birth of Samson; what is striking about his father is his prayer on hearing the news: 'O LORD, I beg you, let the man of God you sent us come again to teach us how to bring up the boy who is to be born.' 1 Kings 13 does not even record the name of the prophet who had such a striking confrontation with king Jeroboam and whose prayer restored the angry king's shrivelled hand.

The point is clear: ordinary people can pray.

B. Prayer transcends national/racial divisions

Prayers are offered in many languages, many cultures and many buildings:

> . . . the voice of prayer is never silent,
> nor dies the strain of praise away.
> (John Ellerton, 'The day Thou gavest, LORD, is ended')

But prayer is offered from the same stance everywhere. In prayer we are all brothers: Job, the man from Uz; the Egyptians (yes!) of Isaiah 19:19–22. Isaiah 56:7 says God's house will be called a house of prayer for all nations. Joel 2:32 predicts the day will come when 'everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.' Zephaniah 3:9 says the day will come when God will 'purify the lips of the peoples, that all of them may call on the name of the LORD and serve him shoulder to shoulder'.

It is true that the Israelites had a special position before God under the old covenant. But Naaman was only a very new believer when he thought that to worship Israel's God he needed Israelite soil on which to do it (2 Kings 5:17)!

The election of Israel did not mean that the Lord was a tribal God. And part of the thrust of the Old Testament towards the New is the vision of 'equal accessibility' to God.

C. Prayer should expose a person's heart.

The Old Testament recognises the reality of hypocrisy (Isaiah 29:13; 1:15) and has much to say about lying lips. Of course, God is never deceived by the mere postures and forms of prayer (Isaiah 58:5). By contrast, God was delighted by Solomon's prayer (1 Kings 3:5–15), for it revealed his godly, true ambitions. We learn a great deal about those who prayed from the vignettes in section 1 above.

Prayer also reveals where our true confidence lies. Ezra was ashamed to ask the king for an escort for his journey to Jerusalem after preaching to the king about the goodness of God (Ezra 8:21–23)! It is easier to affirm your confidence in God when you have plenty of money in the bank than when you are almost bankrupt. Why should this be so?

D. Prayer must not be an escape or an excuse.

Sometimes *action* is needed: 'The LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. Raise your hand . . . divide the sea . . ." ' (Exodus 14,15). Sometimes *sin must be dealt with*. When Joshua was flat on his face after the Israelites' defeat at Ai, the Lord said, 'Stand up! What are you doing on your face? Israel has sinned . . .' (Joshua 7:6; see also Proverbs 15:8; Isaiah 1:15; 29:13).

Prudence may also be required: Nehemiah reports, 'We prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night . . .' (Nehemiah 4:9). *Disobedience* will make God deaf (Proverbs 28:9). Of a disobedient people the Lord said, 'When I called, they did not listen, so when they called, I would not listen' (Zechariah 7:13). *Injustices* must be corrected:

> '. . . you will call and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. *If* [emphasis added] you do away with the yoke of oppression, with

the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed . . .' (Isaiah 58:6–11).

E. Unbelief hinders prayer, but questioning does not necessarily arise from unbelief.

Abraham is promised a son and a land against expectation. He believes and becomes the prototype of trust in God's promises. Yet later he laughs at the prospect of becoming a father at 100 (Genesis 15:2,6,8; 17:17)! It seems that, on balance, his faith outdid his incredulity.

Job's questionings, accusations and storming are rewarded with the remarkable verdict of Job 42:8. Jeremiah's protests get some fairly dusty answers but his call is not revoked. The questions of Habakkuk 1 rise into the faith of Habakkuk 3. The Old Testament records Samuel's angry pleading with the Lord over Saul's rejection (1 Samuel 15:11), and Ezekiel's astonished question, 'Ah, Sovereign LORD, are you going to kill the entire remnant of Israel?' (Ezekiel 9:8; 11:13).

It seems that some questioning is actually the *exercising* of faith, not its *denial*.

F. Pray at all times

There are evening psalms (*e.g.* 4) and morning psalms (*e.g.* 5). Daniel's habit was to pray three times daily (Daniel 6:11), a practice perhaps arising out of Psalm 55:17. But though there may be special times and seasons when one particularly focuses on prayer, the multitudinous occasions in the Old Testament in which prayer is offered constitute the background to the New Testament requirement: 'Pray constantly'.

The perpetual fire burning on the tabernacle altar in Leviticus 6:13 is not explained, but Charles Wesley has combined several possible interpretations in his hymn:

O Thou who camest from above
The pure, celestial fire to impart:
Kindle a flame of sacred love
On the mean altar of my heart.

There let it for Thy glory burn
With inextinguishable blaze,
And trembling to its source return,
In humble prayer and fervent praise.

(*Charles Wesley*, 'O Thou who camest from above')

G. Pray in all places

The Old Testament states that the ark of the covenant is a symbol of God's presence; the tabernacle is a place where his glory comes down; the temple is a place where he makes his name to dwell.

Thus Solomon (in 1 Kings 8) spoke of worshippers coming to, or facing towards the temple when they prayed. Daniel prayed with his windows open

towards Jerusalem. Pilgrimages were made to holy places. One would naturally go to a shrine where one might find a priest to intercede on one's behalf or a prophet to give a word from God.

But the Lord is not a local deity, tied to a particular place or shrine to which worshippers must resort. Many places are named with special reference to him for various reasons, but he is the God whom the largest sky cannot contain, the Creator of the heavens and the earth.

When the temple was destroyed in 587 B.C. prayer did not cease; in some ways it was intensified. This is part of the thrust towards the New Testament and the teaching of Jesus that he himself is the true temple (John 2:19ff.), replacing Gerizim and Jerusalem (John 4:21–24) as the one in whom God's nature and name are revealed.

Because God can be worshipped anywhere pilgrimage to a particular place cannot be a pillar of biblical religion.

H. Pray in any reverent position

Abraham (Genesis 18:22) and Hannah (1 Samuel 1:26) prayed standing. The psalmist (95:6) exhorts the people to kneel like Solomon (1 Kings 8:54) or Daniel (David 6:10). Elijah put his head between his knees (1 Kings 18:42). Abraham (Genesis 17:18), Eliezer (Genesis 24:52), Joshua (Joshua 5:13–16), Moses (Numbers 16:45) prostrated themselves (a posture adopted later by Jesus; see Matthew 26:39). Sometimes hands were lifted up (Psalms 63:4) or spread out, palms upward towards the Lord (Exodus 9:29; Isaiah 1:15).

But particular postures are not required, and a little travelling will quickly reveal a remarkable cultural diversity in postures and patterns for prayer. And God is not deceived by reverent postures that mask a callous or irreligious spirit (Isaiah 58:5)!

I. Pray and fast

Fasting is associated with prayer from earliest times. The Israelites fasted on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). Later, four other annual fasts were observed (Zechariah 8:19) and perhaps a fifth (Esther 9:31).

Fasting was especially associated with grief and penitence and with seeking God's guidance. But abstinence from sin was more important than abstinence from food, just as a broken heart was more important than torn clothes (cf. Isaiah 58; Joel 1:14; 2:12,15).

Fasting is not a meritorious work, and the history of spirituality has thrown up excesses, but it would be foolish for us to ignore the close association between prayer and fasting through many centuries.

J. Pray and tithe

Scholars have been puzzled that 'among all the legal enactments of the Pentateuch there is nothing about prayer apart from Deuteronomy 26.1–15.'[1]

I do not know how to explain this, but the passage itself is remarkable. After the settlement in the land of Israel, the worshipper is to go to the priest with his first fruits. He then makes a quasi-credal statement about his national and family history, places the basket of first fruits before the Lord, bows down before him and rejoices. He also solemnly confesses that he has fulfilled

his tithing obligations to the Levite, the alien, the fatherless and the widow; this is a pledge and token of his gratitude.

We normally separate our religious and material obligations. But here in Deuteronomy the creed and deed, word and work are not separated. Could it be that money is a greater hindrance to prayer than we often recognise?

K. Pray in the name of the Lord

In earliest times, Genesis 4:26 tells us, people began to call on the name of the Lord, though the full significance of that name did not appear until the time of Moses. David approached Goliath fearlessly 'in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied' (1 Samuel 17:45). This does not refer to some talismanic effect, to incantation and mumbo jumbo, but to the fact that David knows the character of his God. It is in this sense that 'The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe' (Proverbs 18:10).

Ideas of the magical power of names were around in the world of Ancient Western Asia, but have no place in Old Testament theology. Knowing God's name does give us some power or 'hold' over him. Even the revelation of his name to Moses (Exodus 3:14) is still somewhat mystifying. Only God knows his own nature. Nevertheless to know God's name is the privilege of a friend, and to be called by his name (2 Chronicles 7:14) is to belong to his family. To have God's name dwelling among us means that we know the God we worship. It is this 'name theology' which distinguishes biblical prayer (in the presence of a God named and known) from the incantations, cajolery and polytheistic despair so common outside the biblical tradition.

The name of God has been more fully revealed to Christians in Jesus, but still the day has not arrived when we shall have full knowledge and will know fully even as we are fully known (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:12). Our knowledge of God's name encourages confidence, but the limitation of our knowledge prevents presumption.

L. Fight anti-prayer forces

There is a rest of faith, but there is also a fight of faith. On the one hand:

> O rest in the LORD, wait patiently for him,
> and he will give you your heart's desire.

On the other hand prayer is a fight against anti-prayer forces and Satanic hindrances. 'Do not invoke the names of other gods; do not let them be heard on your lips' (Exodus 23:13). But in a polytheistic environment there is always a temptation to try every possible avenue (*e.g.* 2 Kings 17:34–41). I myself have been into places in Singapore where there are pictures of Kali, the Buddha and the Virgin Mary.

The Old Testament also knows the pull of astrological practices. Josiah found among the religious establishment priests who offered sacrifices to 'Baal, to the sun and moon, to the constellations and all the starry hosts' (2 Kings 23:5). Isaiah spoke of people who 'consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter . . .' (Isaiah 8:19).

Saul could not resist the pull to 'find guidance by consulting the spirits of the dead instead of consulting the Lord' (1 Chronicles 10:13,14 RSV).

In a 'multi-religious' environment it must have seemed to many Israelites unnecessarily narrow-minded not to insure as widely as possible against disaster.

The Old Testament also records more mundane hindrances to prayer: unbelief, fear, sloth, confusion and pride.

M. In times of crisis or desperation pray for miracles

Joshua spoke to the Lord in the presence of the Israelites and said:

> O sun, stand still over Gibeon;
> O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon.

'There has never been a day like it before or since', records the writer, 'a day when the LORD listened to a man' (Joshua 10:12–14).

Samuel prayed for a thunderstorm in the dry season and was answered (1 Samuel 12:17, 18). In a hopeless position, Asa called to the Lord, 'There is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty', and was marvellously helped (2 Chronicles 14:11). Ahaz with pseudo-highmindedness refused to ask for a sign but got one anyway (Isaiah 7:10)! Hezekiah's prayers resulted in a miraculous deliverance from Sennacherib (2 Kings 19). A tyrant's execution plan was cancelled after the prayers of Daniel's friends enabled him to interpret the King's dream (Daniel 2:18).

But it is Elijah and Elisha who are specially privileged in Old Testament times to receive miraculous answers to prayer: with the Zarephath widow's son (1 Kings 17:18–24), on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18), in perilous personal danger (2 Kings 1:9–16), with the Shunamite's son (2 Kings 4:18–37), and in the case of Elisha with his servant at Dothan (2 Kings 6:17).

We must also record that sometimes prayer may get a person *into* trouble rather than *out* of it — as, for example, Micaiah in 1 Kings 22.

N. Prayer does not always have a 'happy' ending

David's baby died (2 Samuel 12:17.). His numbering of the people, despite his penitence, was followed by the death of 70,000 (2 Samuel 24:10–17). Psalm 88 ends in darkness.

Lamentations, despite 3:40–45, ends in uncertainty in 5:22 (so unbearable, that Jews must read v.21 again). Hezekiah's prayer for his life to be spared was granted, leading to the birth of Manasseh, Judah's worst king (2 Kings 20:2). Psalm 106:15 records that God gave the Israelites what they asked for, 'but sent a wasting disease upon them' (AV 'But sent leanness into their soul').

Perhaps we should be grateful that God does *not* answer some of our prayers, for the answers might overwhelm us.

O. Erect monuments to answered prayer

Jacob erected an altar to God '. . . who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone' (Genesis 35:3). Samuel erected a stone between Mizpah and Shen with the acclamation, 'Thus far has the LORD helped us' (1 Samuel 7:12). Today we may not care to erect monuments of stone to answered prayer, but a notebook may serve the same purpose.

Godly children are perhaps the most notable monuments to answered prayer (see 1 Chronicles 28:9).

P. Pray till God is restless and sends revival

We live in the day of 'walkathons', 'swimathons', and the like. It seems that W. Liefeld views prayer marathons with distaste.[2] I once heard of a money-raising 'fastathon' which seemed a remarkable (because unnoticed) corruption of a spiritual practice into a fund-raising technique.

Theologically it is impossible to believe that there is any point at which we can take a stand in this created universe and lever or force God to work. What then are we to make of the sentries on Jerusalem's walls?

> They will never be silent day or night.
> You who call on the LORD,
> give yourselves no rest,
> and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem
> and makes her the praise of the earth.
>
> (*Isaiah 62:6,7*)

It seems that the Old Testament prefers this lively, risky, anthropomorphic way of speaking (for who can give an unsleeping God sleepless nights!) to a more cautious, neat-and-tidy and passionless way of speaking about him. It appears that God himself has established a cause and effect relationship between seasons of intense prayer and times of revival, which we can study in Scripture, biography and history.

Rarely will you find regular nights of prayer and fasting in churches and organisations in which nothing is happening!

III. PRAYER: A RESPONSE TO GOD'S GLORY AND GRACE

We have thus far followed an inductive approach to our topic, because prayer is above all something we do, not just something we talk about or analyse. We need exhortation, incentives, motivation. It will be good if the imperatives and illustrations above move us even a little way along the path of actually praying.

But there is one danger against which we should guard, and that is overwhelming the subject with commands so that prayer becomes a back-breaking, bone-wearying religious duty.

All over the world people pray to their gods or to the spirits. Phenomenologists tend to assume that all these people are doing the same thing. But is this so? In truth, one's prayers and one's concept of prayer can rise no higher than one's concept of God. The heart of biblical and Christian prayer is the God who is its focus and fountain, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

> God of mercy, God of grace
> Show the brightness of Thy face,
> Shine upon us, Saviour, shine,
> Fill Thy church with light divine,
> And Thy saving health extend
> Unto earth's remotest end.
>
> (*H. F. Lyte,* 'God of mercy, God of grace')

The glory of Old Testament religion is a God named and known. He is a God incomprehensibly transcendent and glorious:

> No one is like you, O LORD;
> you are great
> and your name is mighty in power.
>
> (*Jeremiah 10.6*)

> Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power
> and the glory and the majesty and the splendour,
> for everything in heaven and earth is yours.
>
> (*1 Chronicles 29:11*)

Yet this God is not so great that he cannot hear or does not care, but in marked contrast to the many despots whom history calls great, he stoops to hear the cry of a single childless woman, a helpless widow, a neglected orphan, a persecuted alien. He heard the groans of his people in Egyptian slavery, and repeatedly in the period of the judges. In the vivid words of Judges 10:16, 'the LORD could bear Israel's misery no longer'. In the startling words of Amos 7 he 'repents' (AV; 'relents', NIV) at the intervention of Amos: he allows himself to be prevailed upon in accordance with his promise. His providential over-ruling extends through all space and time and is the backdrop of all the agonising tragedies, bereavements, sufferings and judgments that human beings experience. His character is unchanging, his love is eternal and his dynamic, covenant faithfulness is the basis of our world order, investigated by scientists, pondered by historians, painted by artists and loved by all of us.

Prayer is our response to this God, to this *sort* of God — sometimes jubilant, sometimes meditative, sometimes discursive, sometimes perplexed, and even at times tortured to the point of despair. God is not flattered by our praises, nor shocked by our doubts. Beyond the greatest friend, counsellor or priest, he is the one with whom we are privileged to be in dialogue, listening and speaking in the counterpoint of prayer.

IV. TYPES OF PRAYER

It is tempting to *begin* a paper like this with definitions of the terms and scope of discussion. We have begun with examples rather than analysis, but some consideration of the different forms and types of prayer cannot be avoided.

A. Adoration, worship, praise, thanksgiving.

Books on spirituality draw some fine distinctions here (*e.g.* Worship = praising God for who he is; Praise = thanking God for what he has done). These have some value, but all these activities basically belong to the same domain. Obviously the book of Psalms produces most of the examples here. But other parts of the Old Testament enjoin upon worshippers the duty of praise, because 'he is your praise; he is your God, who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with your own eyes' (Deuteronomy 10:21).

Can praise be commanded? In our experience-centred age it seems almost hypocritical to suggest it. But the Old Testament has no scruples about laying the duty of praise upon us: for God is the infinitely noble and infinitely

adorable object of all our praises, and if our natural feelings do not rise to praise as flowers open to the sun, they must be trained to do so. Israel is the people whom the Lord formed for himself that they might proclaim his praise (Isaiah 43:21), and they are censured for neglecting to do so.

B. Confession, lamentation, penitential prayer

One entire book is composed of lamentations over ruined Jerusalem, and several examples have already been cited of confession and penitential prayer. To someone nourished by biblical teaching it is entirely natural that Isaiah's response to his vision of the thrice-holy Lord, enthroned in the temple among the seraphim, is 'Woe to me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips . . .' (Isaiah 6). The more we see the transcendent glory and holiness of God, the more acutely we become aware of our own negligence, lovelessness and stubborn rebellion against the grace of God. The Old Testament records several prayers of lamentations in a time of national disaster or crisis.

Christians in many countries today can identify with the Israelites who groaned out of their slavery to a delivering God. Other Christians have been stimulated by the promise of 2 Chronicles 7:14 to pray more concertedly for their nation.

C. Entreaty, petition, intercession, mediation, supplication.

The heading might even include 'Expostulation' and 'Arguing with God'. This is the most striking category in which my assigned parts of the Old Testament speak of prayer.

Moses and Samuel are famous as intercessors (see Jeremiah 15:1; Psalm 99:6). 'Far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you . . .' is one of Samuel's most memorable sayings (1 Samuel 12:23).

But there are several other examples.

Both Jehoshaphat (2 Kings 3:11ff.) and Benhadad (2 Kings 8:8) recognised Elisha as an intermediary. Zedekiah requested Jeremiah to pray for him (Jeremiah 21:2), and the remnant of the Israelites also recognised him as the one through whom they could find God's guidance (Jeremiah 42:1–4). The Jewish elders recognised Ezekiel in the same way (Ezekiel 20:1–3). Amos interposes between the Lord and his purposes of destruction (Amos 7:1–6).

Prayer may be defined most broadly as communion with God. Naturally the *listening* that is involved goes mostly unrecorded. Sometimes the 'prayers' offered are lengthy, but often (especially in Nehemiah) they are very brief. But it seems that the most characteristic picture of prayer in the Old Testament is that of a mediator, a bridge-builder, a person 'standing in the gap', who, as it were, brings God and man together, speaking for one to the other. In this the great men and women of prayer in the Old Testament foreshadow the great Intercessor and Mediator himself (cf. John 17).

We have already mentioned (in Section II. A, above) how the Old Testament emphasises the holiness of God and restricts access into the holiest place of tabernacle and temple. The book of Hebrews celebrates the unique mediatorial work of Christ with the result that we may penetrate more boldly into God's presence than ever before.

It is only in a derivative sense that we can speak of intercessors as intermediaries for us.

D. Vows, oaths, asseverations and invocations

All over the world, especially in times of trouble and in tight spots, people make vows to their gods (usually quickly forgotten when circumstances improve). The Old Testament witnesses to this practice.

Abraham vows he will take nothing from the king of Sodom (Genesis 14:22). Jacob adopts a rather bargaining attitude with God on his way into exile (Genesis 28:20–22). With a solemn ritual the Jewish elders are to vow that they are not responsible for an unsolved murder (Deuteronomy 21:7ff.). Jephthah's famous vow landed him in agony (Judges 11). Hannah in the bitterness of her childlessness promised to dedicate her son to the Lord if he would give her one (1 Samuel 1:11). During the reform of Asa the people 'took an oath to the LORD with loud acclamation [that they would keep the covenant] . . . All Judah rejoiced about the oath because they had sworn it wholeheartedly' (2 Chronicles 15:14,15).

In heaven, no doubt, yes will be yes and no no. On earth promises are needed because men are so often liars. The general attitude of the Old Testament to vows is: 'Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God . . . It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfil it' (Ecclesiastes 5:2–7).

It is not a sin not to vow, but 'if you do make a vow to the LORD your God, do not be slow to pay it' (Deuteronomy 23:21–23).

E. Invocations, benedictions and curses

Profanity (including blasphemy) is a relic of a lost belief. Even atheists feel the need of some more emphatic way of speaking. Invocations are natural within a theistic world-view; they are a testimony to the sacredness of all of life, a reminder of God's universal presence. This is surely a justification for common practices like saying grace before meals. It would be a good idea if we 'said grace' before a lot of other everyday events too.

The Old Testament has many examples of invocations. 'Whenever the ark set out, Moses said, "Rise up, O LORD! May your enemies be scattered; may your foes flee before you and put to flight those who hate you!" Whenever it came to rest, he said, "Return, O LORD, to the countless thousands of Israel"' (Numbers 10:35,36). Deborah's song ends with an invocation (Judges 5:31). Naomi invokes a blessing on Ruth (Ruth 1:8), Boaz on Ruth (Ruth 2:12) and Naomi on Boaz (Ruth 2:20). After cutting off a piece of Saul's coat (and sparing his life), David says, 'May the LORD judge between you and me [*i.e.* which one of us is wrong] . . .' (1 Samuel 24:12). Solomon prays for the Lord to enter the temple and stay there for ever (2 Chronicles 6:41).

Benedictions are a particular form of invocation, and for centuries meetings and lives have characteristically ended with a blessing. Aaron's blessing is perhaps the best known:–

> The LORD bless you and keep you;
> The LORD make his face shine on you
> and be gracious to you;
> The LORD lift up his countenance upon you
> and give you peace.
>
> (*Numbers 6:24–26*)

But there are many other examples: Noah (Genesis 9:26,27); Melchizedek

(Genesis 14:19,20); Isaac (the famous case of the stolen blessing — Genesis 27:27ff.; 28:1,3ff.); Jacob (Genesis 48:3ff.). Moses set before the people a blessing and a curse (Deuteronomy 11:26ff.). Joshua blessed the 85-year-old Caleb (Joshua 14:13). When Solomon had finished his dedicatory prayer at the temple he blessed the people and they blessed him (1 Kings 8:55,66). It is a pity that in many circumstances benedictions have become formalised. They should be a climax of worship and praise, a parting reminder of God's faithfulness.

> The blessing of the LORD brings wealth,
> and he adds no sorrow to it.
>
> (*Proverbs 10:22*)

What are we to say about the imprecations which also appear in the Old Testament?

The first thing is to notice that they are, precisely, prayers. We have the story of David's life to show that he did *not* in fact take into his own hands the vengeance for which he prayed. Proverbs 8:13 says, 'To fear the LORD is to hate evil.' Jehu says to Jehoshaphat, 'Should you . . . love those who hate the LORD?' (2 Chronicles 19:2).

It is probable that this subject can be understood only by those who have travelled with the psalmist and other saints to the uttermost depths of human existence, who have shared the experiences of the shot, bombed, burnt, herded together, sorted, gassed, hanged and tortured; who have travelled to and, miraculously, returned from the Auschwitzes of the mind of which our century is uniquely full.

> Our moral antagonism to the spirit of those who oppose us is so much mixed up with the emotional reaction of our offended self-concern that we are almost incapable of impersonal anger — the dreadful anger of perfect love at hate or selfishness.[3]

In *Voyage to Venus*, C. S. Lewis portrays Ransom's Flight with the Un-man reaching the stage where '. . . an experience that perhaps no good man can ever have in our world came over him — a torrent of perfectly unmixed and lawful hatred. . . . It is perhaps difficult to understand why this filled Ransom not with horror but with a kind of joy. The joy came from finding at last what hatred was made for.' Those of us who live normal, comfortable lives are in no position to sit in judgment on those who seem to be crying to God from another planet, from a completely different dimension of existence. By what standards can *we* judge the legitimacy of their language in the extremity of their need? Our recoil from the vehemence and even ferocity of their cries may be more a token of our shaken apathy than our superior theology.

The prayers are there — in the Bible and in history. They cannot be erased and should not be edited out. Job cannot be reduced to platitudes nor Jeremiah to smooth parsonical precision. Only God, the creator God and the crucified God, the God who has himself travelled past the uttermost depths of human pain, is in a position to weigh these cries, to purge and purify them and to answer them as he sees best.

V. CONCLUSION

Richard Lovelace[5] speaks of visiting a famous harpist's storeroom, where she

kept harps of various sizes. When he plucked the largest, every harp in the storeroom resounded with the same note.

The consequences of a group of men and women beginning to resonate in tune with our trinitarian God are incalculable.

Who would have thought that the prayers of a shoemaker, William Carey, in an unknown village in the Midlands of England, over a self-made leather world map, would begin the modern missionary movement!

Who would have thought that the round-the-clock prayer meetings begun in Count Zinzendorf's community in 1727 would have continued for 100 years! The community was, aptly enough, called Herrnhut, 'the Lord's Watch' (cf. Isaiah 62:6–7).

Who would have thought that the 'Haystack prayer meeting', begun when some students took shelter from a thunderstorm, would have had such an amazing effect on the development of the Student Volunteer Missionary Fellowship!

Who would have thought that the vision of a few Indians would produce the Third World's largest missionary society, the Indian Missionary Prayer Band!

Who would have thought that the prayers of Christians in the catacombs beneath the streets of Rome, a persecuted and pilloried sect, could make the pavements shake and finally bring down the walls of Rome itself!

Who would have thought that, through some of the fiercest persecution of modern times, the praying Christians of China would have seen what is, perhaps, the most astounding church growth in history!

> When all Thy mercies, O my God,
> My rising soul surveys,
> Transported with the view, I'm lost
> In wonder, love and praise.
>
> (*Joseph Addison*)

> As the deer pants for streams of water,
> so my soul pants for you, O God.
> My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
> When can I go and meet with God?
>
> (*Psalm 42:1,2*)

> But the LORD is in his holy temple;
> let all the earth be silent before him.
>
> (*Habakkuk 2:20*)

> LORD, teach us to pray.
>
> (*Luke 11:1*)

APPENDIX: WORD STUDY

For a detailed inductive study the following words, at least, would need investigation, as overlapping the same semantic domain. It is sometimes not easy to see the principles on which differing translations have been made. On the assumption that Young's *Concordance* to the King James version is still the most widely used, I have constructed the table below, which records:

Column 1 The Hebrew word
Column 2 Young's transliteration
Column 3 A modern transliteration

Column 4 The page and column number in the Index Lexicon at the back of Young's where the Hebrew word may be found (for exhaustive lists of English translations).

Column 5 Recorded English translations by number, as follows:
1: Pray, prayer
2: Intreat
3: Beseech
4: Entreat
5: Make supplication
6: Make intercession
7: Seek (the face of) God
8: Call to the LORD, with the name of the LORD
9: Ask, enquire

	1	2	3	4	5
1	פלל	palal	*pālal*	33.6	1, 2, 6
2	תפלה (cognate noun to no. 1)	tephillah	*ʾpīllâ*	49.5	1
3	חנן	chanan	*ḥanan*	10.2	1, 2, 3, 5
4	עתר	athar	*ʿāṯar*	5.5	1, 2
5	פגע	paga	*pāgaʿ*	33.5	1, 2, 6
6	שיח	siach	*śîaḥ*	47.4	1
7	דרש	darash	*dāraš*	13.6	7
8	חלה	chalah	*ḥālâ*	9.5	1, 3, 4
9	קרא	qara	*qārā*	36.3	8
10	בקש	baqash	*bāqaš*	7.2	7
11	שאל	shaal	*šāʾal*	43.2	9

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3

Prayer in the Psalms

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I INTRODUCTION

Prayer has always been a central concern in the life of the people of God. The book of Psalms is understood as the expression of the heart of Israel's prayers. In this paper we will study the different kinds of prayer that are found in the Psalter. By 'kinds of prayer' are meant petitionary prayer, intercessory prayer, thanksgiving prayer, and so forth. However, since certain kinds of prayer tend to be found in certain types of psalms, some explanation of the different types of psalms will also have to be given. For example, the petitionary prayer is usually found in the type of psalm known as the 'individual lament' and the 'community lament', while intercessory prayers are often found in the 'royal' psalms. Then we will discuss some difficult features of these prayers, in particular the vengeful and cursing expressions and the declarations of innocence. Their meaning will be carefully examined in their context. In studying the kinds of prayer that were familiar to the people of Israel we should gain some directions for our prayer life today.

II. DEFINITION OF PRAYER

Perhaps the logical place to begin is a brief definition of the various Hebrew words for prayer that are found in the Psalter. While the definitions tend to focus narrowly on petitionary prayer, the whole context of the Psalter shows that prayer was rather more broadly understood then than now.

In the book of Psalms, the most common Hebrew word for 'prayer' is *tᵉpīllâ*. This noun occurs thirty two times including its five occurrences in the titles of the Psalms.[1] Its verbal form *hithpallel* also occurs three times.[2] Several other Hebrew words are used in the similar sense of 'to pray', *e.g.*, *šā'al* (to ask, entreat, beg; Pss. 27:4, 122:6), *qārā'* (to call, cry; Pss. 14:4; 118:5), *ṣā'aq* (to cry out; Pss. 22:5; 107:13,19; 142:5), *ḥānan* (in *hithpael*, to implore, make supplication; Pss. 30:8; 142:1), *ḥālāh* (in *piel*, to entreat, implore; Ps. 119:5). Considering all the meanings of the Hebrew words mentioned above, we find that they denote the common meaning of 'petition'.

The word 'prayer', however, is usually understood in a broad sense. For example, the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* says: 'Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgement of his mercies.'[3] According to this definition, prayer is not merely petition, but includes confession of sins and thanksgiving. Similarly, contemporary theologians define prayer in a broad sense.[4] Roland E. Murphy defines prayer as 'not simply asking for things: it is the varied expression of the human condition in the presence of God'.[5] This broader definition seems to be supported by the context of the Psalms. The prayer psalms,[6] which have titles referring to prayer, not only ask for things, but also are intermingled with expressions of trust (Pss. 17:15; 102:28), praise (Pss. 86:7–10; 90:1–6), innocence (Pss. 17:2–5; 86:2), and vows (Ps. 86:12–13). Such mixed expressions of prayer have long been practised in the church, as the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms show. While the meaning of the terms for prayer in the book of Psalms basically connotes 'petition', their practical meaning in the context of the Psalms goes beyond the meaning of 'petition', and includes invocation, lament, repentance, confidence, praise, vow, etc. In other words, prayer in the book of Psalms is not used in a narrow sense, but much more broadly. Prayer is implicitly understood as man's address to God. If we adopt this broad definition, we may say that the majority of the psalms are prayers which display all kinds of address to God, called forth by various human conditions. Those psalms that are not classifiable as prayers are those whose subject is pure wisdom and pedagogy (Pss. 1, 37, 49, 112, 127, 133, etc.).

III THE FIVE DIFFERENT KINDS OF PRAYER IN THE PSALMS

As already pointed out, prayer in the Psalms does not only indicate petition but also includes variable expressions of Israel's communion with God. Each prayer generally displays its dominant thrust whatever its literary type may be. This section will discuss the following five kinds of prayer according to the dominant thrust in each psalmic prayer, without paying attention to the Psalm's literary type: A. petitionary prayer; B. penitential prayer; C. intercessory prayer; D. thanksgiving or confident prayer; E. hymnic prayer.

A. Petitionary prayer

This prayer is often found in the 'individual lament' and the 'community lament'. 'Lament' commonly refers to an expression of grief, sorrow, or deep regret. When the term 'lament' is utilized technically with respect to the Psalms, however, it is used in relation to a *type* of psalm. Some psalms are called communal lament psalms when they are presented before God as an appeal for divine intervention in the face of a national disaster. Other psalms are classified as individual lament psalms when they are addressed to God in the context of an individual disaster, and appeal for God's help. In some individual and communal lament psalms, the petition is the dominant thrust throughout the psalm. Because of the dominance of the petition, the psalm may be called a petitionary prayer psalm. But the lament psalm does not consist only of the component of petition; it usually includes confidence (and

praise) as well as lament.[7] With the expressions of lament, the psalmist makes petition to God for his compassion and help. Then he concludes the psalm with an expression of confidence in God's help or with words of praise. In petitionary prayer, the principal objects of petition are God's presence, good health, spiritual help, moral strength, material good, long life, rich progeny, victory in war, and the like. An example of petitionary prayer is Psalm 13:

1. How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?
   How long will you hide your face from me?
2. How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
   and every day have sorrow in my heart?
   How long will my enemy triumph over me?
3. Look on me and answer, O LORD my God.
   Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death;
4. My enemy will say, 'I have overcome him,'
   and my foes will rejoice when I fall.
5. But I trust in your unfailing love;
   my heart rejoices in your salvation.
6. I will sing to the Lord,
   for he has been good to me.

These six verses are a brief prayer psalm composed of three parts: (1) vv.1–2: the lament proper; (2) vv.3–4: the petition; (3) vv.5–6: the words of confidence and praise. The first part explains the psalmist's trouble. It consists of the question 'How long?' repeated four times. 'How long?' is a very human objection to continual anguish and persecution. Through the fourfold repetition of 'How long?' the psalmist explains his relationship to God, to himself, and to his enemy. The relation of these three subjects to each other defines the fundamental elements of the lament: God, the one who laments, and the enemy.[8]

In the first question introduced by 'How long?', the psalmist makes assumptions about his relationship with God. He feels he is far from God and forgotten by him. Indeed, God does not answer him and he is still enduring painful suffering.

The second 'How long?' indicates that the psalmist has tried to 'see' God, but God has hidden his face from the psalmist. In other words, the poet has sought God's mercy for a long time, but God has not listened. So he cries out, 'How long will you hide your face from me?' This agonising cry of the psalmist shows that he is near death (cf. v.3).

The third 'How long?' shows us more clearly how the psalmist has vigorously tried to escape from his painful condition. He has made many plans to seek God's mercy and to be delivered from the present persecution, but his plans have proven to be vain. So the psalmist mourns all day long. He does not know what to do in order to be delivered from his present painful condition. He cries out, 'How long must I wrestle with my thoughts?'

The fourth 'How long?' concerns the enemy of the psalmist. The poet complains that his sorrow and pain, which give his enemy an occasion to be haughty, cannot be justified. The poet questions, 'How long will my enemy triumph over me?' By complaining of his pitiful condition, he expresses his deep trouble and seeks God's compassion on him.

In the second part (vv.3–4), the psalmist directly appeals to God for help.

The poet, feeling himself far away from God, prays, 'Look on me and answer, O LORD my God.' Here, God is called to look upon his troubled life. This petition may correspond to the hiding of God's face (v.1). God is directly asked to answer — a more immediate appeal than the four questions in the first part (vv.1–2).

The psalmist implores God to enlighten his eyes which are dimmed with anguish and grief. This petition for light for the eyes may be regarded also as a petition for the restoration of physical strength: the restoration of man's health makes the eyes bright (cf. 1 Sam. 14:27, 29; Ezr. 9:8). This request springs from the fear and proximity of death. The poet is in peril of death unless God intervenes in his trouble and delivers him from his enemies. In v.4, enemies are described as real foes seeking his life. So the psalmist prays that God may hear him in order that his enemies may not be able to overcome him, and that they may not rejoice over his misfortune. All these requests indicate that the poet strongly believes that God alone can deliver him from his terrible distress.

The psalmist's complaint and plea do not clearly indicate what precisely was disturbing him or who his enemy was. Mowinckel suggests that the enemies in Psalm 13 refer to sorcerers 'who have caused the illness through their fatal witchcraft, or increased it by evil wishes'.[9] But this view is based on a one-dimensional interpretation of the psalm without justifiable grounds.[10] The context of Psalm 13 does not provide any evidence to identify the enemy so confidently as a 'sorcerer'. Dahood and Craigie[11] understand the enemy to be death. Psalm 13, however, seems to refer to something other than that. The enemy is apprently a personal being rather than a personification of death: the enemy is described as triumphing (v.2), saying (v.4), and rejoicing (v.4). Further, the enemy is depicted as annoying and persecuting the psalmist. Besides, death is described literally in verse 3 and no metaphorical term is used anywhere else to indicate death.

In the third part (vv.5–6), we see a rapid movement from lament to confidence and praise. There are no more complaints or petitions in vv.5–6. The psalmist expresses his confidence and praises God. His faith has triumphed over doubt and anticipates the fulfilment of his petition. These final words of trust and praise in Psalm 13 are one of the characteristic features of the individual and communal lament psalms. The psalmist discloses that even though he has been complaining to God, he has not lost his faith in him. This faith of the psalmist resembles that of Job (Job 16) — faith of a really precious kind, for it shines when under trial. We may say that his complaint is based on his trust in God's lovingkindness. By declaration of his trust, his complaint is no longer expressed, but his firm confidence that God will listen to his prayer is demonstrated: 'My heart rejoices in your salvation' (v.5). Such an assurance results from his strong faith in the Lord, even though his salvation has not yet come. Finally he promises God: 'I will sing to the Lord, for he has been good to me'. This final note of praise shows that the prayer is no longer an expression of complaint, but an expression of thanksgiving. Such joyful words reveal the effect of prayer: it transforms a person from one who complains to one who praises.

As is the case in Psalm 13, we Christians are easily tempted by the feeling that we are forgotten by God when we are in trouble and deep sorrow. But God does not forget us. We should cling fast to the truth that God is merciful to the poor supplicant who cries out for help and deliverance. Surely God will

listen to the petitions of his people. If our relation to God is right, his help will never be broken off.

Furthermore, Psalm 13 teaches us that prayer strengthens our faith. The psalmist's faith was not strong enough to proclaim his confidence in God's help at the beginning of his prayer. But later, at the end of his prayer, his heart is flooded with confidence and praise. Such is the power of prayer and the effect it can have.

Psalm 13 is an example of the individual petitionary prayer, the most frequent type found in the Psalms. It occurs in Psalms 3–7; 25; 28; 31; 35; 39; 41–43; 54–57; 59; 61; 63; 64; 69–71; 77; 86; 88; 120; and 140–142.

The petitionary prayer of the *communal* psalms is presented in a similar way in Pss. 44; 74; 79; 80; 83; 85; and 89. In the petitionary prayer of the community, the lament is usually introduced with 'Why?'[12] or 'How long?'.[13] The petitionary part beseeches God for some benefits (*e.g.* Ps. 79:9). Then the community expresses its confidence that God will listen to their prayer, and at that they praise God (*e.g.* Ps. 79:13). Through this basic structure of the petitionary prayer, we see that the laments of OT saints do not end as complaint, but were effectively a means of stimulating intense devotion. The time when the writer thinks he is deserted by God becomes an occasion to break into an urgent petition to God. By all kinds of arguments, the prayer seeks to move God to consider the writer's cause. The final words of confidence and praise should not be interpreted simply as a formula for petitionary prayer in Israel's cult (although in communal laments its formulaic significance cannot be discussed). But the individual petitionary prayer was not always written for cultic use. In any case, there are instances where divine help comes to the one who prays during his supplication (*e.g.* Dan 9:20–23).

B. Penitential prayer

Occasionally the confession of sins dominates an entire psalm and in that case imparts to it the character of a penitential psalm.[14] The psalmist confesses that the wrath of God comes to him because of his own sin. In the book of Psalms, seven psalms (Pss. 6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143) were designated penitential psalms in the ancient church. Among these seven, however, only Psalms 32, 38 and 51 include the confession of sin. The other four psalms do not; in them the motif of penitence recedes into the background.

The most famous penitential prayer is Psalm 51. This prayer contains the most profound analysis of sin and the renewal of the sinner found in the OT.

We may divide this psalm into five parts. The first part invokes God (vv.1–2) for mercy and for cleansing from sin. The psalmist claims nothing for himself, but seeks God's lovingkindness and compassion. This invocation is followed by a confession of sins in the second part (vv.3–5):

3. For I know my transgressions,
   and my sin is always before me.
4. Against you, you only, have I sinned,
   and done what is evil in your sight,
   so that you are proved right when you speak
   and justified when you judge.
5. Surely I have been a sinner from birth,
   sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

This confession of sins first begins with the writer's recognition of his transgressions, of which he has become fully aware. The psalmist's sins drive him to seek God's mercy according to God's unfailing love and great compassion. Secondly, sin is depicted as an accusing presence before the sinner, who is incessantly bothered by his sin. Such remorse over sin is much more characteristic of the people of God than of unbelievers. Thirdly, the psalmist indicates that every sin is ultimately sin against God. In the much disputed verse 4a, 'Against you, you only, have I sinned', the psalmist probably indicates that sin ultimately is against God. No one is so perfect that he never sins against another human being, but whether or not some behaviour is (strictly speaking) *sin* is determined by whether that behaviour is right or wrong in the eyes of God. If we do anything against our neighbour that God judges wrong, it is just as if we did wrong against God. This interpretation is fully illustrated by Joseph's saying, 'No-one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?' (Gen. 39:9). Here Joseph states that if he commits adultery with Potiphar's wife, it is a sin against God. Furthermore, the petitioner in Psalm 51 completely agrees with God's verdict on his sins. God is justified in punishing him and in declaring him guilty.

Fourthly, the psalmist discloses the depth of his corruption by acknowledging in v.5 the depravity of the human race. The poet admits that he was born in iniquity, and his mother conceived him in a state of guilt. This confession does not indicate that the marital relationship is sinful in itself, nor is it uttered to minimise his responsibility for his sins, for he has already mentioned five times that the sins are his own (vv.1–3). Besides, the marital relationship itself is one of God's blessings, given to human beings at the time of creation (Gen. 1:28; 2:18,24). The point in verse five is that the psalmist emphasises the depth of his sinful condition by his total involvement in human sinfulness from the very beginning of his existence.[15] Throughout his confession, he recognises his sins, reveals the accusations of his conscience, and declares that every sin is ultimately against God. Then he fully accepts the divine verdict on his sins and emphasises the depth of his corruption by his total involvement in human sinfulness.

The third part (vv.6–12) of the psalm is made up of the psalmist's petition to God for deliverance from sin:

6. Surely you desire truth in the inner parts;
   you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.
7. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
   wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
8. Let me hear joy and gladness;
   let the bones you have crushed rejoice.
9. Hide your face from my sin
   and blot out all my iniquity.
10. Create in me a pure heart, O God,
    and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
11. Do not cast me from your presence
    or take your Holy Spirit from me.
12. Restore to me the joy of your salvation
    and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

This third part, the petition to God, is juxtaposed with the description of the effect of sin. Sin separated the psalmist from God's blessing. The sinner cannot hear any comforting words from God (v.8). His sin fills him with pain as if his bones had been broken (v.8). So he entreats God to forgive him. The psalmist does not plead only for the forgiveness of sins, but also for the restoration of his entire life. The prayer acknowledges that he cannot have a clean heart by himself. So he asks God, 'Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me' (v.10). To gain a pure heart is depicted as an act of creation which only God can bring about. The psalmist seeks the totally new creation of the core of his being. Further, he entreats God not to take the Holy Spirit from him (v.11). If we assume that the author of Psalm 51 is David (accepting the title of the psalm), David's petition for the Holy Spirit is a special prayer for his kingship. From the day of his anointing as the king of Israel, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power (1 Sam. 16:13). The Spirit was the gift of the Lord for him to carry out his kingly office. Here, David's losing the Spirit means God's rejection of his kingship. If we remember the case of David's predecessor, Saul, David's fear is much easier to understand. Saul's disobedience and impenitence made him lose the Spirit and experience rejection from his kingly office (cf. 1 Sam 15:26, 16:14). Fearing such a rejection as Saul's, David emphatically beseeches God not to take the Holy Spirit from him.

Finally, the fourth part (vv.13–21) concludes with the promise that the psalmist will teach others in order to convert sinners, and will give thanks to God. Further, the poet expresses confidence that God will listen to his penitential prayer by saying, 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise' (v.17). The last two verses (vv.18–19) could be an additional petition of David for the construction of Jerusalem's wall.[16] If so, the wall built around Jersualem by king Solomon (1 Kings 3:1) can be regarded as the fulfilment of David's prayer.

In contrast with this individual penitence in Psalm 51, we find a communal confession of sins in Psalm 106. This psalm examines the history in which Israel's ingratitude and disobedience are depicted through their history. With words of praise for God's mercy, the exiled people confess their sins and their fathers' sins from the time of the sojourn of their fathers in Egypt. They acknowledge that the captivity came upon them because of their sins. Then they plead for God to save them and to gather them from among the nations (vv.47f.).

Although some psalms are not penitential psalms in their main thrust, they contain a short confession of sins or a short plea for forgiveness of sins. For example, Psalm 79 is a petitionary prayer of Israel for God's deliverance from their devastation. When they beseech God to deliver them, they seek God's forgiveness for their sins and for their forefathers' sins (vv.8–9). This sincere plea for forgiveness of sins is motivated by Israel's understanding that forgiveness of sins is necessary for the restoration of their previous relationship with God, since all sin involves separation between people and God. A short confession of sin like that in Psalm 79 is also found in some individual petitionary psalms (*e.g.* Pss. 25:7,11; 38:4,18). In both psalms, along with his primary petition for help, the writer briefly beseeches God to forgive his sins.

In the penitential prayers of the Psalms, the penitent seeks God's

forgiveness not on the basis of any human merits, but on the ground of God's mercy (Pss. 51:1; 79:8ff.). The ground for forgiveness is not found in human beings, but in God alone. Hence, the psalmist's sins drive him to look at the great mercies of God. It is an important step towards true penitence for the sinner to look for God's abundant mercies. Whoever sins does not need to see himself, but to see God's great compassion. The psalmist teaches us that God does not despise a broken and contrite heart (Ps. 51:17b).

Although the penitent clearly expresses his own responsibility for the present wretchedness or calamity he is suffering, it is remarkable that he confesses not only his own sins, but also the hereditary sin, the fathers' sins (Pss. 51:5; 79:8; 106:6ff.). The psalmist does not explicitly teach a doctrine of original sin, but he appears to feel the burden of the fathers' sins as well as his own. The suppliant probably knew the teaching that the iniquities of the fathers are visited on the children (cf. Exod. 20:5; 34:7; Num. 14:18,33; Deut. 5:7; 1 Kgs. 21:29; Jer. 32:18; etc.).

In the penitential psalms discussed above, it is instructive to note the promise of the penitent that he will give thanks to God and will bear witness to God's saving works (Pss. 51:13–15; 79:13; 106:47). The penitent heart touched by God's mercies cannot be silent: it must praise him and tell of his deliverance to others. Such an autobiographical testimony will be a more powerful message to unbelievers than the message of those who do not deeply experience God's forgiveness of their sins. Here, the psalmist seems to teach that the praise and witness of the forgiven penitent are also the privilege and duty of all other forgiven penitents.

C. Intercessory prayer

Intercessory prayer is prayer in which the petitioner asks God for something on behalf of someone or something else. Such a prayer is usually offered for those who have authority among the people. So intercessory prayer is often found in royal psalms in which the king plays a role. Royal psalms were most probably related to the living kings of Israel and Judah.[17] In behalf of the reigning king, Israelites prayed to God. Intercessory prayer is also sometimes offered for the poor or afflicted (cf. Pss. 10 and 12).

Psalm 72, a 'royal' psalm, is a typical example of an intercessory prayer. The author, Solomon,[18] leads the people to pray to God for the king, on whom their welfare and justice chiefly depend. This psalm was probably utilised at the king's coronation ceremony. Psalm 72 was also understood messianically in the church.[19] The ideas and hopes expressed in this psalm lead the people to look not only to the present, but also to the future messianic king who will bring them all to fruition.

This psalm is composed of five parts. In the first (vv.1–7), the psalmist beseeches God to give the king justice and righteousness so that his rule would establish a peaceful and equitable society. In verse five, 'Let them fear you while the sun endures',[20] the psalmist makes another plea for the promotion of the worship of God through the righteous rule of the king. Therefore, this intercessory prayer for the king is concerned with the blessings of the king, people, and God.

The second part (vv.8–11) expresses a desire for a world-wide extension of the king's dominion beyond his rule over the nation.[21] The psalmist beseeches God to extend the king's rule from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of

the earth (v.8). Furthermore, the poet dares ask that all nations give universal homage and tribute to the king. Such a prayer seems to be an ideal which cannot be realised by any merely human king on this earth. Only the messianic king will fulfil such a prayer.

In the third part (vv.12–14), the psalmist indicates that his plea for the king's world-wide dominion is ultimately for the universal extension of divine justice. The king will deliver the needy and the afflicted from their sufferings. The righteous administration of the king will bring joy and liberty to the world.

The fourth part (vv.15–17) expresses a plea for abundant blessings on the king, but this plea does not simply repeat the previous blessings. Rather, it seems to be offered as the grateful response of people to the king's righteous reign (vv.15,17).[22] The people pray to God for the king's long life and prosperity. The psalmist indicates that they will enjoy great prosperity in the mountains, fields and city through the king's righteous rule (v.16). Furthermore, we see the plea for the king's lasting fame and for the people's blessing in the righteous king (v.17).

In the fifth part (vv.18–20), the psalmist expresses the closing doxology. The final three verses are usually regarded as a later addition to Psalm 72 to round off the second book of the Psalms (chs. 42–72).[23] Verse 20 may well be an annotation by the compiler of the Psalms, but the doxology (vv.18–19) is probably a part of the original text to Psalm 72. The praise of God's wonders and name becomes a positive reminder that the king's reign and blessing are the reflection of God's sovereign rule and salvation. In the doxology, God is called 'the LORD God, the God of Israel'. This compound name of God implies that although God is the Lord of all the people, he is especially the God of Israel. The poet desires the whole earth to be filled with his glory. The final verse (v.20) informs us that the earliest collection of the Psalms was called 'prayers', even though they are now named 'praises' in the Old Testament.

Psalm 20 is another intercessory prayer for the king. This psalm was probably used in intercessory worship on the eve before the king went to war.[24] However this psalm is not intercessory in the normal sense because it is not addressed directly to God, but to the king, even though the interceding words reflect the expression of the people's prayer for the king.[25] This particular form of prayer seems to be explained by the context of Israel's worship. Verse three depicts the king offering meal offerings and a burnt offering. In the meantime, the people seem to join him in words which are formally addressed to the king, but vocalize the prayer and desire of the king who is offering sacrifices to God.[26]

Psalm 20 is divided into two main parts: intercessory prayer of the people on behalf of their king (vv.1–5), and the people's expression of confidence (vv.6–9). In the first part (vv.1–5), the people invoke God to answer and to help in time of crisis. This petition accompanies the king's offering. The meal offering is a tribute from the faithful worshipper to God. By the meal offering the king expresses his fidelity to God. The burnt offering has the purpose of establishing peace with God (Lev.1:3f.), and atoning for the worshipper's sins (Lev.1:4).[27] So the people request God to remember the royal meal offerings and burnt offering in order to fulfil the king's desire for victory against the enemy: 'May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans

succeed' (v.4). And verse five indicates that the king's victory will not be a merely personal matter, but the people's joy and celebration.

The second part (vv.6–9) is made up of an expression of confidence (vv.6–8) and a concluding plea to be heard (v.9). Along with intercession for the king, they express confidence in God's future saving activity. No matter how powerful the weapons of which the enemies boast, the people declare that they will not fear, but depend on the name of the Lord. They speak of their future victory as if it has already happened. At the conclusion of Psalm 20, the people make a final petition to God for the salvation of their king. This plea is an expression of the people's recommitment of themselves to the Lord.

Psalm 21 is another 'royal' psalm, but not fundamentally a petition: instead it is an instance of praise. Psalms 20 and 21 can be regarded as a pair of psalms. The former expresses the people's prayer and the latter mainly expresses thanksgiving for God's help. In Psalm 20, the people pray to God for the victory of the king. Now in Psalm 21, they praise God in worship after the king has returned from his victory. Psalm 21 expresses the people's intercessory praise on behalf of their king. Only the final verse of Psalm 21 records their petition: 'Be exalted, O LORD in your strength' (v.13). This plea displays the desire of the people for Yahweh's power to be with the king.

In Psalm 10, the psalmist beseeches God to destroy the wicked and the evildoers. It includes a short intercessory prayer for the afflicted (v.12). Psalm 84 is usually designated a song of Zion, and is related to pilgrimage to the temple of Jerusalem. The psalmist expresses his yearning for the courts of the temple. He envies the cult officials and the worshippers who are privileged to enter the temple. In these hymnic words, the poet entreats God to look upon the face of his anointed. Another intercessory prayer is found in Psalm 125:4 where the psalmist describes his firm confidence in God's protection of his people and petitions him on behalf of those who are good and upright.

D. Thanksgiving or confident prayer

Prayers of thanksgiving are restricted to entire psalms of thanksgiving. When God answered some prayer or delivered an individual (or the nation) from trouble, the man (or the nation) offered thanks to God. So the thanksgiving prayer is a prayer of praise for the specific deed which God has just done for the one giving thanks.[28] This prayer usually consists of several components, but its dominant component is the thanksgiving which expresses thanks to God for his specific help, protection, or restoration.

Similarly in the confident prayer there are varied components; but the poet primarily expresses his confidence in God's future help or salvation, based upon God's past help and merciful acts.[29] Both the thanksgiving prayer and the confident prayer are offered to God on the basis of God's past saving action. Therefore in some psalms, such as Psalm 9, both the elements of thanksgiving and of confidence are intermingled with each other.

The following paragraphs analyse Psalm 40 as a psalm of thanksgiving prayer. This psalm is divided into four parts: (1) praise for God's acts (vv.1–10); (2) an expression of confidence (v.11); (3) the lament proper (v.12); (4) a petition for God's deliverance (vv.13–17).

In the *thanksgiving* component (vv.1–10), the psalmist first gives thanks to

God for his past deliverance from a serious calamity which is not clearly explained but which is described as 'the pit of destruction' and 'the mud and mire' (v.2). These two phrases graphically suggest *sheol* as a horrible pit of mire and clay — in other words, the calamity is depicted as something like the suffering in *sheol*. It seems to indicate a deadly disease. God's deliverance of the psalmist from the abhorrent situation stimulates him to sing a new song to God. Here the poet confesses that not only his salvation but also his new song, a song of praise to God, is God's gift to him (v.3).[30] Here, we see a humble admission that who we are, and what we have, are gifts from God's hand. Verses 3b–5 express new praise for God's blessings and wonders to his people. God is praised especially for his unique love to the faithful. In vv.6–10, the psalmist teaches us two ways of being thankful to God. The first is by our complete subjection to God's will. Any formal sacrifices are not acceptable to God (vv.6–8). The second is by our proclamation of the glad tidings of God's righteousness to other people (vv.9–10). Here the poet indirectly reproaches the one who is saved but who egotistically enjoys his salvation privately. The public testimony to God's saving act is seen as an important duty of the faithful.

The second part (v.11) is a connecting verse between the thanksgiving part (vv.1–10) and the following lament and petition (vv.12–17):

> You, O LORD, will not withold your compassions from me,
> your lovingkindness and your truth will continually preserve me (v.11 RSV).

In this second part, the poet expresses a firm confidence that God will protect him in the future. To the divine saving acts, the psalmist faithfully responds and he fully trusts the Lord. So he is assured that the Lord will not restrain his compassion and lovingkindness.

In the third part (v.12), the psalmist describes his trouble. This is the *lament* proper which is usually found in the psalms of petitionary prayer. Here the poet does not clearly indicate the nature of the trouble. The evils are depicted as threatening to destroy the psalmist. Further, he says that his iniquities have overtaken him, suggesting that his distress is essentially a chastisement for sin. He is fully aware of the force of sin which has overtaken him like a powerful enemy. In fear and terror, he loses his vision and is greatly discouraged.

The last part (vv.13–17) is the *petition* component. The psalmist petitions God for deliverance from his present calamity. The petition is threefold: (1) a plea for deliverance (vv.13, 17); (2) a plea for the destruction of his enemies (vv.14f.); (3) a plea for the joy and gladness of the faithful (v.16). The first plea is very urgent, implying the gravity of the psalmist's condition. The destiny of the psalmist seems to be in jeopardy if God's deliverance is delayed; the psalmist desperately seeks God's help. The second plea is offered against his adversaries who seek his life. He petitions that they will be humiliated and appalled because of their shame. In the third plea, he seeks God's blessing on those who seek God and his salvation. This last plea implies that the adversaries are not merely the adversaries of the psalmist alone, but also of the faithful, godly people who seek God's deliverance from the power of their enemies. Here, the petitionary words are also intermingled with the expression of trust ('You are my help and my deliverer', v.17). This

confession of trust in the midst of petition seems to indicate the psalmist's strong confidence in God's help. In Psalm 40, then, as mentioned above, the predominant part is thanksgiving for God's past saving acts which function as the basis for an urgent petition to God for present deliverance.

Psalm 27 is classified as one of the individual psalms of lament.[31] But this psalm shows a dominant element of trusting confidence. So this psalm may be called a psalm of *trust.*[32] We may divide Psalm 27 into the following three parts: (1) a jubilant expression of confidence (vv.1–6); (2) a petition for help (vv.7–12); (3) the concluding words of trust (vv.13–14). In the first part (vv.1–6), the confidence of the psalmist in the Lord is strongly emphasised. The poet calls the Lord 'light', 'salvation', and 'stronghold' (v.1). Such epithets were applied to God because of his saving acts. The psalmist experienced victories against his enemies through God's help, so he expresses confidence in the future, for God will protect him again in the day of trouble. Here, the house of the Lord is depicted as the place of God's protection. That is why the psalmist seeks to dwell in the house of the Lord. The house of God, however, does not refer literally to the temple of Jerusalem; in this context it symbolises divine protection. In verses 4–5, the reason the psalmist wishes 'to dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of [his] life' is not that he wants to be a member of the temple personnel who permanently live in the temple precincts, but that he wants to experience the nearness of God which he has experienced afresh in the sanctuary.[33] If God is near him, he does not need to worry about any trouble and any enemies. The psalmist appears to be certain of the future protection of the Lord by means of his prayers. His heart is thereby assured of his victory against the enemies who surround him (v.6). Having trusted in God's future protection, the psalmist concludes by singing praise to the Lord.

The second part (vv.7–12) is made up of petitions to God. The petitions are threefold: (a) a plea for God's audience (vv.7–10); (b) a plea for guidance to enable him to walk in God's way (v.11); (c) a plea for protection from enemies (v.12). In his first plea for a hearing, the poet seeks God's favour, for the psalmist seems to feel he is far away from God. The second plea (v.11) is for instruction to walk in God's way. The psalmist indirectly confesses that he cannot walk in God's way by himself. He pleads to be led in the way of God. In the third plea (v.12), the poet seeks God's help to be delivered from the power of the enemies who bear false witness against him. Apparently they make plots and commit violence in order to trip up the psalmist. The poet pleads for God to deliver him from the hands of these opponents.

Then in the third part (vv.13–14), the psalmist again expresses his confidence that he will see the goodness of the Lord. God's grace will be shown to him, not after death, but in this earthly life. The poet exhorts himself to wait for God's deliverance (v.14). This self-exhortation flows from his steadfast trust in the Lord.

In Psalm 9 we find that both components, thanksgiving and confidence, dominate the prayer. Since the element of petition is only briefly expressed, Psalm 9 is usually called a thanksgiving psalm,[34] but the petitionary component should not be neglected.

At the beginning of Psalm 9 (v.1–2), the psalmist promises to give thanks to the Lord in the future. He will also proclaim God's saving acts to others. Verses 4–10 express his confidence. The writer is sure that his enemies and

their cities will be destroyed because the Lord is the righteous Judge. Such confidence is based on the past saving acts of the Lord, even though they are not explained in detail. In vv.11–12, the psalmist praises the Lord because he avenges the blood of the afflicted and executes his justice against the oppressor. Verses 13–14 are devoted to petition. The psalmist beseeches God to consider his troubles. In this plea, a desire for praise is strikingly connected with the petition. In verses 15–18, the poet once more expresses words of confidence. Looking back on the destruction of the nations and the righteous judgment of the Lord, the poet is sure that the wicked will perish, but the faithful will not be forgotten by God. The final part (vv.19–20) is a final plea for God's judgment upon the nations. The judgment is expected to terrorise the nations and to make them recognise their human frailty and weakness.

In the above discussion of Psalm 9, we have clearly seen a mixed style of thanksgiving and lament. Such a mixed style is also found in other psalms, such as Pss. 84, 90, 104, and 125. As Mowinckel indicates,[35] the mixed style does not show any lack of sensitivity to the laws of art or the absence of a clear plan on the part of the poet. Rather, it is entirely natural that from the high flights of thanksgiving or confidence the psalmist would return in prayer to his own, or to his people's distress and would petition God.[36] This understanding is not merely a theoretical argument, but it must be experienced practically in the life of the one praying.

E. Hymnic prayer

Hymnic prayer is a purely contemplative prayer of adoration directed exclusively to God.[37] In such a prayer, the psalmist praises God for his greatness and might or for the beauty and wisdom of his creation. The difference between the thanksgiving prayer and the hymnic prayer lies in the fact that the hymnic prayer praises God for his action and his being as a whole, while the thanksgiving prayer praises God for a specific deed which God has done for the one giving thanks.[38]

The psalms characterised by hymnic prayers are usually full of hymnic expressions without making any petition to God. These psalms are not prayers of petition, but prayers of praise. It must be said, however, that in some psalms of lament, such as Pss. 7, 57 and 59, the hymnic element is slightly mingled with the dominant element of petition.

The basic structure of hymnic prayer is in three parts: (1) introduction; (2) main part; (3) conclusion.[40] In the *introduction*, the psalmist begins with a call to praise God. This call is sometimes expanded by explaining the object of praise (Ps. 113:1–2), or by defining the addressed people (Ps. 135:1–2). The *main part* of the hymnic prayer is the actual praise of God. Here the psalmist usually explains the ground of praise. The nature and works of God are praised and God is adored. The *conclusion* of the hymnic prayer is usually short. It often repeats the introductory call. Psalm 113 is an example of hymnic prayer:

1. Praise the LORD.
   Praise, O servants of the LORD,
   praise the name of the LORD.
2. Let the name of the LORD be praised,
   both now and forevermore.

3. From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets,
   the name of the LORD is to be praised.
4. The LORD is exalted over all the nations,
   his glory above the heavens.
5. Who is like the LORD our God,
   the One who sits enthroned on high,
6. who stoops down to look
   on the heavens and the earth?
7. He raises the poor from the dust
   and lifts the needy from the ash heap;
8. he seats them with princes,
   with the princes of their people.
9. He settles the barren woman in her home
   as a happy mother of children.
   Praise the Lord.

This psalm is divided into three parts: (1) introduction (vv.1–3); (2) main part (vv.4–9b); (3) conclusion (v.9c). The introduction (vv.1–3) calls the reader to praise the Lord. The people so called are addressed as the servants of the Lord, *i.e.* his worshippers. The psalmist repeats three times the imperative word 'praise' in verse one. Such a repeated exhortation indicates a strong desire of the poet to adore God. Perhaps he had experienced the overwhelming reality of God — his sovereign power and his wise providence. Hence this call to praise is extended to the uttermost limits of time (v.2) and to the uttermost parts of the earth (v.3). To the psalmist, such universal praise can alone be adequate to the greatness and splendour of the Lord.

In the main part (vv.4–9b), the poet gives the grounds for his strong exhortation to praise the Lord. Our God is the majestically exalted Lord (vv.4–5). He is exalted over the nations. He sits far above the heavens and the earth (v.6). The exalted Lord watches this world. This is the God who not only watches over but also cares for his people (vv.7–9b). Those who are despised by most people — the poor and the needy — are raised from dust and ashes. In contrast to human hostility to the afflicted, God is merciful enough to lift them from degradation and give them a place of honour with princes. Moreover, it is God who listens to the prayer of the barren woman (like Hannah, 1 Sam. 1–2). By God's favour a childless woman becomes a happy mother of children. All these features can be described in the following three expressions: God's majesty, his providence, and his mercy. The psalmist's words of praise are derived from contemplation of God's nature and works.

The conclusion repeats the introductory exhortation, 'Praise the LORD' (v.9c). The people of God are again summoned to praise the Lord. The hymnic prayer in Psalm 113 is a prayer of praise from beginning to end.

We find another beautiful hymnic prayer in Psalm 29. This psalm is understood, according to Talmudic tradition, as being sung at the Feast of Weeks. Psalm 29 is composed in three parts: the *introduction* is vv.1–2; the *main part* is vv.3–9; and the *conclusion* is vv.10–11. The subject of the main part (vv.3–9) is 'the voice of the Lord'. This phrase occurs seven times. Delitzsch therefore calls this psalm 'the psalm of seven thunders', for the Bible often identifies thunder with the voice of the Lord (1 Sam. 17:10; 2 Sam. 22:14; Job 36:29, 37:4–5, 40:9; Ps. 81:7; and so on). The divine voice of

thunder fills the human heart with fear and trembling. The mighty power of God is visualised through the solemn scene of a thunderstorm. Nothing can stand against the powerful and majestic voice of the Lord. The many waters (v.3), the cedars of Lebanon (v.5), Mount Hermon (v.6), and the Desert of Kadesh (v.8) are submissive to the awe-full voice of the Lord. Depicting the mighty power of God through thunder, the psalmist praises God and exhorts his readers to ascribe to him glory and strength.

Such hymnic prayer is richly expressed in other psalms, *e.g.* Pss. 8, 33, 65. These psalms are understood to be liturgical songs sung at Israel's worship. In addition, we find many beautiful hymnic sentences in Pss. 66:1–7 and 89:5–18, and in the doxologies at the end of each book of the psalms (Pss. 41:13; 72:18–19; 89:52; 106:48; and 150).

Recognising the greatness, majesty, strength, holiness, and goodness of the Lord, a sincere believer cannot but praise him. Contemplating God's nature and his abundant grace, we may say that our prayer should be first hymnic prayer, and then petitionary prayer. In the primitive church of Jerusalem, the believers started to pray with the hymnic expression, 'Sovereign LORD, you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them' (Acts 4:24). Also it is noticeable that the 'eighteen prayers' in the Jewish synagogue constitute fundamentally a cry of praise. For example, when the leader of the congregation says, 'Praised be Thou Jehovah!' then the congregation replies, 'Glory be to thee forever!'[41]

So far we have discussed the five kinds of prayer in the Psalms. The first is *petitionary* prayer. In this prayer, the major component is the petition. The second is *penitential* prayer. Here, the confession of sins appears as the predominant motif. The poet usually acknowledges that his distress is the result of his sins. The third is the *intercessory* prayer. This prayer was usually offered for those who had authority among the Israelites, especially for the king. The people prayed for their king at the time of the royal coronation ceremony or at the time of war. Sometimes the psalmist intercedes for the faithful or the afflicted. In the intercessory prayer, a desire is expressed for the execution of God's righteousness on the earth.

The fourth is the *thanksgiving* or 'confident' prayer. Here the dominant part is thanksgiving or confidence in God. This type of prayer begins with confidence or thanksgiving for previous benefits. Then, from the high flights of doxology, the psalmist returns to his own or to his people's distress and briefly implores God to help. This mixed expression reflects the prayer's fluctuating emotions and thoughts in the presence of God. The fifth is the *hymnic* prayer. It is a prayer of praise. Contemplating the nature and the works of God as a whole, the psalmist cannot but call on others to praise the Lord. In psalms characterised by hymnic prayer, the psalmist wholeheartedly praises God without offering any petition to him. This kind of prayer must be a higher prayer than those prayers which are full of complaints and petitions. As Christians we should learn to pray to God in such hymnic adoration focused exclusively on God.

IV. THREE DIFFICULT FEATURES OF PRAYER IN THE PSALMS

In the prayers found in the psalms are some features that are hard to

undestand. Among them, the following three will be discussed in their contexts in order to gain a proper understanding: (A) vengeful and cursing expressions, (B) rapid changes from complaint to confidence, (c) declarations of innocence.

A. Vengeful and cursing expressions

Amongst the psalms of petitionary prayer are the *imprecatory* psalms, which are characterised by expressions of revenge or curses. The psalmist passionately beseeches God to curse or to destroy his enemies. Consider Psalm 137:7–9:

> 7. Remember, O LORD, what the Edomites did
> on the day Jerusalem fell.
> 'Tear it down,' they cried,
> 'tear it down to its foundations!'
> 8. O Daughter of Babylon, doomed to destruction,
> happy is he who repays you
> for what you have done to us —
> 9. he who seizes your infants
> and dashes them against the rocks.

In this psalm, the writer first makes a strong petition to God for the punishment of Edom on the grounds that the Edomites plundered the defenceless city and killed the fugitives when Jerusalem was destroyed (Obad. 10–14). Then, the spirit of vengeance turns to Babylon, the chief destroyer of Jerusalem (vv.8–9), with an outburst but not a direct petition to the Lord. The outburst is nevertheless part of the plea to the Lord that begins in verse 7. Here the psalmist discloses his desire to dash the children of Babylon against the rocks. Such vengeance contrasts with the teachings of Jesus concerning loving our enemies and praying for those who persecute us (Mt. 5:44; Lk. 6:27; 23:34).

In that way, therefore, should we understand the imprecatory words? Roland E. Murphy has suggested that the petition to God for revenge is offered because the psalmist is sinful and the community is sinful.[42] In other words, it is natural for us to sense the vengeful spirit in his prayer because he is a sinful man like us. Murphy explains the vengeful spirit as an index of the intensity of the prayer itself as well as of the sinful humanity that is praying. Further, he says that 'the Bible makes no pretence — the pretence is rather on the part of the reader — of describing correct moral behaviour'.[43] In a similar way, John Bright speaks about the writer of Psalm 137: 'This man who put Jerusalem above his highest joy was not a saint. He who loved Zion so devotedly and hated his foes so passionately was the same man.'[44] In this view, we cannot expect only ethically correct teachings from the lips of the psalmist. As a Jewish exile in Babylon, the psalmist deeply longs for Jerusalem where he worshipped. On the other hand, he hates Babylon when he thinks of her rape and destruction of Jerusalem. Bright explains that both the psalmist's longing and the hate will confront Christ; Christ will fulfil his hope but not exactly as he wants it; Christ will judge rather than condone the hate of the psalmist, but will not expurgate the passionate involvement that creates the hate; the hate of the psalmist must be judged and surrendered so

that the passionate involvement that created the hate may be transmuted into zeal for the kingdom.[45]

Such an understanding of the expressions of revenge seems to be partially acceptable. Even Job does not always say everything correctly; he is sometimes wrong. For example, Job depicts God as an evil hunter who shoots arrows against him, splits his kidneys open, and pours his gall onto the ground (Job 16:13). Job looks for God, but he cannot find God for he does not answer Job. Hence, Job who believes in the sovereign power of God describes God as an evil being who likes to trouble the righteous. Furthermore, we find in the OT such immoral stories as Lot's incest and David's sin with Bathsheba. All these immoral phenomena in the OT, including the psalmist's hate, will confront Christ who will judge them.

But the expression of revenge seems to be different from the immoral behaviour of Lot and David, and from the ignorant complaint of Job. The behaviour of the latter three is clearly condemned as sin in the ten commandments. Job's complaint against God may be regarded as a violation of the third commandment; Lot and David violated the seventh commandment. But the prayer for revenge must be considered in relation to the law of retaliation in the OT. The people of the OT lived under the law of God which explicitly speaks of this law (the *lex talionis*) in Exod. 21:22–25, Lev.24:17–22, and Deut. 19:21. The law of retaliation seems to be well-known to OT believers because pleas for revenge are found not only in prayers in the Psalms, but also in other OT books (2 Chr. 24:22; Jer. 11:18–20; 15:15; 17:18; 18:19–23; 20:12, and so on).

In the light of the law of revenge in the OT, it is surely hasty to say that revenge is expressed because the psalmist is sinful. Rather, the OT law justifies the psalmist in his plea for revenge. Moreover, it is also important to note that the prayer for revenge was offered not simply because of personal hatred or vengeance, but because of zeal for God's righteousness. Indeed, along with prayers for revenge, the psalmist almost always beseeches God to execute justice (Pss. 8:2; 9:17–20; 79:9–10).[46]

One of the functions of OT believers in God's economy was to make articulate the cry of 'all the righteous blood shed on earth'.[47] Their imprecatory words shows that God is the God of justice who vindicates the righteous and repays the injustice of the evil-doer. The request of the psalmist for revenge is not simply the expression of personal retaliation or hatred, but an appeal to God's justice and God's honour.

For example, as we have seen before, the writer of Psalm 137 prays to God to repay the Edomites for what they did on the day Jerusalem fell (v.7). They showed their cruel hatred against Zion, God's city (Obad. 10ff.). The psalmist also turns to Babylon, the worst devastator of Zion and God's temple. With harsh words, the poet expresses his wish for the complete destruction of Babylon. This request for revenge is contextually indicated to be an expression for God's justice. The poet appeals to God out of passionate love for the city of God.

The prayer for revenge in Ps. 69:22–28 seems at first glance to be simply a petition to God to avenge the psalmist for the persecution he has personally suffered. But when we carefully read the whole psalm, we discover that the reason why the poet asks God to punish his foes is in order to manifest God's justice. For they insult and scorn the psalmist who trusts in the Lord. He is

depicted as being scorned and insulted for God's sake (vv.7–9). In Psalm 28, the poet prays to the Lord to requite the wicked for what they do against the works of the Lord (v.5). This is a signficant point that we must not fail to see: the ultimate concern of the psalmists in their request for revenge is God's justice and God's honour. When God's people, God's city, or God's sanctuary is devastated by the enemies, the psalmist appeals to God for help. For it is God's honour and God's justice which are here at stake. The NT similarly sanctions such a stance (*e.g.* Rev.6:9–11; cf. 2 Thess. 1:6–10), even though personal vendettas are strictly forbidden (*e.g.* Rom. 12:17–21).

Along with prayer for God's justice and God's revenge, we find that God himself often metes out severe punishments on evil people. God commands the Israelites to wipe out the entire people of Jericho (Deut. 20:16; Josh. 6:21), and all the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15:3,18,32f.). Any uncircumcised man, according to the commandment of God, will be cut off from his people (Gen. 17:14, cf. Exod. 4:24–26). Furthermore, God severely punished Israel's leaders who forsook the divine laws and provoked God to anger. For example, God says to the wife of Jeroboam through the prophet Ahijah, 'I am going to bring disaster on the house of Jeroboam. I will cut off from Jeroboam every last male in Israel — slave or free. I will burn up the house of Jeroboam as one burns dung, until it is all gone' (1 Kgs. 14:10). As this prophecy is uttered, Baasha strikes down all the household of Jeroboam and does not leave to Jeroboam any persons alive (1 Kgs. 15:29). The same horrible judgment was executed on Baasha (1 Kgs. 16:3–4; 10–11) and on Ahab (1 Kgs. 21:21–24, 2 Kgs. 9:6–10, 10:11).

Such terrifying judgments in the OT serve as prototypical foreshadowing of the final judgment, the judgment of hell itself. Every man will finally be judged before the throne of the Lord according to what he has done. The unrepentant evil-doers will be thrown into the lake of fire, the eternal hell. In the final judgment, God will avenge the persecution and the blood of his servants. The writer of Revelation says, 'Rejoice over her, O heaven! Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you' (18:20; cf. 16:6; 19:2; Mt. 23:33–36).

So the request of the psalmist for revenge does not only appeal to God to help the righteous, but also foretells and warrants the final judgment on the ungodly throughout redemptive history. If the imprecatory psalms open our eyes, on the one hand, to the final destruction of the wicked and, on the other hand, to the vindication of the righteous, they have done their work. Now Jesus asks Christians to be ministers of his love which was shown on the cross (cf. Mt. 5:43f). He loved sinners unto death. Whoever receives the love of Christ and follows him will be saved, and will not perish. Having shown the horrible curse and punishment on evil-doers in the OT, God expects the disciples of Jesus to follow the steps of their Teacher. We must pray for our enemies to experience the love of Christ, and leave the question of vengeance upon the unrepentant to God and his coming judgment.

B. Rapid changes from complaint to confidence

In the discussion of petitionary prayer, the rapid change of mood has already been briefly noted. For example, Psalm 22 shows a rapid passage from lament to confidence. The psalm is mainly composed of two parts: the *lament* (vv.1–21), and *confidence and praise* (vv.22–31). Since the words of praise and

confidence in the second part stand in such marked contrast to the lament in the first part, some interpreters (*e.g.* Duhm, Cheyne, and Schmidt) have thought that Psalm 22 was originally two different psalms.[48] But the majority of commentators regard the rapid change of mood as characteristic of prayers in the psalms, especially the petitionary prayers.[49] As already discussed above, expressions of confidence and praise are usually one of the main components in psalms of lament. Two main approaches, however, have been employed to explain the rapid changes of mood. The first is a cultic approach which assumes that the words of confidence and praise are a priestly oracle foretelling the deliverance of the individual praying. The change of mood is explained by the alleged cultic setting. When the psalmist describes his troubles and beseeches God's help, the answer of praise and confidence, in this view, is proclaimed by a cultic member.[50] This is possible if the psalm was originally written for use in worship. But frequent changes of mood occur in other than the supposedly cultic-originated psalms.

Another explanation for the changes of mood may be called the psychological approach. According to this approach, the changes of mood are regarded as changes in the psalmist's heart during his prayer for God's intervention. Westermann suggests that the changes of mood are a powerful witness to God's intervention which stirs the lamenter to trust and praise God, although the reasons for his sorrow are materially unchanged.[51] Of course, no one will deny God's intervention during prayer. But it should not be supposed that trust in God's future help is suddenly given to the psalmist at the moment of prayer. The psalmist's faith in God's help already existed at the beginning of his prayer, although his faith was not strong enough to proclaim his confidence in God's help. Even his lament and petition are based on his faith in God's lovingkindness, encouraging the sufferer to anticipate the joy of deliverance.[52] Moreover, an invocation to God is found at the beginning of almost every prayer in the Psalms, and this testifies to the psalmist's faith in the Lord who alone can be trusted in time of trouble. Here it is important to notice that trust in God's future help does not suddenly develop in the psalmist's heart during his prayer. The psalmist had already trusted in the Lord before he called on him for help in the midst of terror and tribulation.[53] As Calvin indicates, prayer is the chief exercise of faith.[54] Without faith no one beseeches God to help. On the other hand, prayer makes the individual's confidence and praise more intense. Hence the passage from lament to confidence and praise results from the intensified faith that is the fruit of prayer.

C. Declarations of innocence

In the psalms of lament, we frequently find declarations of personal innocence. The psalmist protests that he cannot find any reason in himself as to why he suffers. With strong protests, he asserts his innocence and beseeches God to deliver him from suffering. For example, in Psalm 44, the expression of innocence is a part of the people's complaint against God (v.9–22). The Israelites protest that their present calamity is inexplicable because they had committed no sins that deserved it. They had been faithful to the divine convenant (v.17) and had walked in the path of God (v.18). Furthermore, they had worshipped and followed their God only (v.20–21).

Nevertheless, they had been crushed, killed, and slaughtered (vv.19,22), apparently a reference to the terrible devastation of war.

Similar expressions of innocence and righteousness are found in other psalms (*e.g.* Pss. 7:3–5, 8; 17:1–5; 18:20–24; 26:2–7; and 86:2). These expressions have been difficult for Christians to understand. How can a sinful man assert his innocence before a holy God? Interpreters have struggled to understand these texts.

According to Roland E. Murphy, the psalmist's expression of innocence does not imply that he committed no sin.[55] As the qualification for dwelling in the house of God (Pss. 15:2; 24:2), the psalmists require a blameless life and sincere heart (Ps. 15:2) and a clean hand and pure heart (Ps. 24:4). Such requirements, Murphy indicates, are really more than human effort could achieve.[56] He suggests, therefore, that these requirements are not to be understood in their literal sense, but rather mean 'a declaration of intent, a proclamation of loyalty to certain ideals that made possible the access to the presence of the holy God'.[57] In the same way, according to Murphy, an expression of innocence makes sense as 'a declaration of loyalty, not as an examination of conscience'.[58]

This understanding seems to be partly correct. It should also be acknowledged that the psalmist's assertion of innocence in some psalms is not a declaration of loyalty to God, but really a claim of innocence of particular crimes charged against him by his enemies. Such an example is found in Ps. 7:3–5 which will be discussed later in this section.

John Calvin takes another approach in interpreting the declarations of innocence. According to Calvin, when the saints use such expressions they do not mean that they are morally innocent. 'By such expression,' Calvin says, 'they mean nothing else but that by their regeneration itself they are attested as servants and children of God to whom he promises that he will be gracious.'[59] Calvin, however, acknowledges that there are some cases where the Israelites put forward their own righteousness and simplicity of heart in comparison with their enemies in order to move God to help them.[60]

Calvin's interpretation seems to be applicable to some psalms, but it cannot be regarded as the correct understanding of all the declarations of innocence in the Psalms. The varied contexts in which the declarations of innocence occur indicate that their meanings cannot be reduced to in one sense. Rather, some of the claims to innocence mean that the psalmist is innocent of particular charges laid against him by his enemies, as shown, for example, in Ps. 7:3–5:

> 3. O LORD my God, if I have done this
> and there is guilt on my hands —
> 4. If I have done evil to him
> who is at peace with me
> or without cause have robbed my foe —
> 5. then let my enemy pursue and overtake me;
> let him trample my life to the ground
> and make me sleep in the dust.
> *Selah*

Here, the psalmist's claim to innocence is expressed in the form of an oath and seems to refer to particular charges laid against him by his enemies. He

denies the wrongdoings of which he is accused in vv.3f. The poet swears that if he had done those things then his enemies would have every right to pursue him. In other words, he announces his innocence to justify himself in the face of false accusations.

Secondly, a declaration of innocence may indicate that the psalmist is a member of the covenantal family to which God has called him.[61] We may say that the poet's expression of innocence is a way of claiming that by his covenantal affiliation he has become one of God's children to whom God promises to be gracious. In Ps. 86:2, the petitioner says, 'Guard my life, for I am a godly man [*ḥāsîḏ*]. You are my God, save your servant who trusts in you.' Here, the psalmist does not seem to claim a holy life which is innocent of any worldly sins; but he pleads the covenant relationship by which he becomes one of the people of God as seen in the phrase 'a godly man' (the translation of the Hebrew word '*ḥāsîḏ*'. This word denotes a man who is an object of the lovingkindness of Yahweh. The Hebrew noun *ḥesed* originally meant a ruling relationship of kindness and covenant between a lord and his people.[62] In this context, Calvin seems to be right when he says, 'By such expressions they mean nothing else but that by their regeneration itself they are attested as servants and children of God to whom he promises that he will be gracious.'[63] This understanding seems to be supported by the explanation of the godly men in Ps. 50:5; the psalmist regards the godly ones as those who have made a convenant with God by means of sacrifice.

Thirdly, the expression of innocence often indicates a profession of loyalty and devotion to God. This third meaning is closely related to the second meaning: the psalmist as one of God's people professes his loyalty and devotion to God. Such a declaration of loyalty to God is seen in Ps. 18:20–23.

> 20. The LORD has dealt with me according to my righteousness;
> according to the cleanness of my hands he has rewarded me.
> 21. For I have kept the ways of the LORD;
> I have not done evil by turning from my God.
> 22. All his laws are before me;
> I have not turned away from his decrees.
> 23. I have been blameless before him
> and have kept myself from sin.

At first glance these verses appear to be arrogant declarations of the psalmist's own merits. But the psalmist confesses in vv.32–36 that his strength and blamelessness and victory come from God himself. He depicts himself as a weak and frail human being. In the previous verses (v.16–19), the poet regards his past deliverance as the result of God's saving act. God's salvation, sovereign power, and faithfulness are emphasised throughout Psalm 18. God is praised because of his faithful deliverance of those who are faithful to him. Then how should we understand the brief expression of innocence (v.20–23) amongst the many confessions of his weakness, frailty and dependence upon God, and his jubilant praise for God's salvation, sovereignty, and faithfulness? It is hardly to be supposed in this context that by this declaration of innocence the psalmist pleads his sinless righteousness. Rather, he pleads his loyalty and dedication to God.[64] The similar claim to sinlessness in Ps. 26:1–2 is correctly pointed out by Murphy to be 'a declaration of loyalty, not . . . an examination of conscience.'[65] Such a declaration of innocence should not be compared

with Pharisaic self-righteousness, but with St. Paul's expression of conscious rectitude (Acts 20:26ff.; 23:1).[66] The psalmist's words of moral integrity and blamelessness in v.20–23 are presented to God not in order to plead his sinlessness, but to move God to help him, for the poet thoroughly acknowledges that his strength and blamelessness come from God himself (v. 32). Similar declarations of innocence are to be found in Pss. 26:2–7 and 44:17–22.

In summary, we have found that the meanings of the declarations of innocence in the Psalms cannot be limited to one sense, for the varied contexts in which these expressions occur generate three differentiable meanings. First, the psalmist is innocent of some particular charge laid against him by his enemies. Second, the poet's declaration of innocence indicates that he is a member of the covenantal family into which God has brought him. The psalmist is depicted as one of the godly to whom God promises to be gracious. Third, the claim to innocence indicates a profession of loyalty and devotion to God. By declaring his innocence, the psalmist pleads his loyalty to God. Then he confidently calls upon God to deliver him from his present calamity.

V. CONCLUSION

Throughout this study of prayer in the Psalms, it has been presupposed that the book of Psalms is the expression of the heart of Israel's prayers. From it we learn how the OT saints prayed and what the subjects of their prayers were. They use their distress as means of intensifying their devotion to God. They confess that sin is an accusing witness against the sinner. The psalmists indicate that the confession of sins is necessary for renewal of one's whole life. Sin is clearly depicted as the cause of personal and communal calamity.

On behalf of the king, the Israelites offer intercessory prayers. They indicate that the king's victory and salvation are not simply his personal concerns, but also their joy and celebration, for the king is responsible for the peace and prosperity of the nation. Intercessory prayer is an expression of the people's unified effort to deliver their nation from their enemies. In most of the petitionary prayers, the Israelites remember to express their confidence and praise to God. This witnesses not only to divine intervention during the prayer, but also to the proper attitude for believers in times of distress. Moreover, their prayers of thanksgiving and confidence testify that their faith is not childlike, but mature. In hymnic psalms, Israelites devote themselves wholly to the praise of God without offering any petition to him. Contemplating God's majesty and his mercy, the psalmist cannot but praise the Lord. Hymnic prayer must be an advanced and higher form of prayer than those prayers which are full of complaints and requests.

The psalmists' claim to innocence should not be understood in one sense only. A psalmist sometimes suggests that he is innocent of some particular charge laid against him by his enemies (cf. Ps. 7:3–5). Elsewhere, the poet's claim to innocence means that he is bound to God in covenantal relationship. As a member of the covenantal family, he seeks God's mercy and help. Another meaning of the declarations of innocence is very closely related to the previous meaning: the psalmist, who is in the covenantal family, utilises

the claim to innocence to declare his loyalty to God. Through a declaration of his loyalty, the psalmist confidently calls upon God to deliver him from the present distress.

The vengeful and cursing expressions in the psalms indicate that God is the God of justice who vindicates the righteous and repays the injustice of the evil-doers. The request of the psalmist for revenge is not simply the expression of personal retaliation or hatred but an appeal to God's honour and God's justice. So the imprecatory psalms teach us not only the passionate love of the psalmists for God's glory and God's justice, but also the ultimate destiny of the wicked. As the psalmist prays for revenge, the writer of Revelation sees in his vision that God will finally judge evil-doers and the devil himself for the way they treated the saints, the apostles, and the prophets (Rev. 16:6, 18:20, 19:2; cf. Mt. 23:33–36).

Throughout our discussion of prayer in the Psalms, we have found prayer to be the believer's source of courage and strength, and the Israelite's weapon against the enemy. The book of Psalms is far more than a mere collection of prayers. It powerfully teaches us to seek the Lord in all our varied human conditions. That was the means by which the psalmist experienced peace in his life.

4

Prayer in the Gospels and Acts

M. M. B. TURNER

I. INTRODUCTION

Christian prayer, like that of the saints of the Old Testament, is an answer both to the *command* of God: 'Seek my face . . .' (Ps. 27:8, etc.) and also to his *offer* to hear our cry and to turn to us in grace (Ps. 4:3, etc.)[1]. Distinctively Christian prayer, however, is rooted in the example and teaching of Jesus, and of the apostolic circle. To this example and teaching the Gospels and Acts naturally bear important witness. But that is not to say the treatment of the four writers is uniform. Of the four, Luke and John require special attention.

While Matthew and Mark certainly give us much more than a passing reference to prayer, it is Luke who focuses the matter, and makes it a major theme in his writings. He incorporates most of the relevant material in Mark and he shares many of the important sayings of Jesus on prayer with Matthew (who, indeed, has some sayings Luke has not: Mt. 6:5–6; 18:19f.; 21:22 and 24:20). But Luke has more besides. He not only finishes up with 59 per cent more occurrences of prayer terminology than Matthew[2] — with a wider range of prayer vocabulary too[3] — but he also has an additional three distinctive parables relating to prayer (The Friend at Midnight [11:5–8]; the Unjust Judge [18:1–8]; and the Pharisee and the Tax-Collector [18:9–14]).

More significantly, his Gospel account begins with prayer (the crowd in the temple praying as Zechariah burns the incense offering [1:10 and cf. 1:13]) and ends with prayer (Jesus' priestly blessing of the disciples before his ascension, and their worship of him and thanksgiving to God in the temple [24:51–53]). Moreover, prayer attends most of the important turning points within the Gospel, as we shall see.

Again, Matthew's prayer material is dispersed under other thematic heads. For example, even his most extensive section of teaching on prayer, 6:5–15, is simply offered as part of the broader theme of 'true piety'[4], along with almsgiving (6:2f.) and fasting (6:16f.). Luke's parallel material, by contrast, is clearly given in answer to the disciples' specific request, 'Lord, teach us to pray' — and this in response to seeing Jesus praying (11:1).

Perhaps one of the most striking indications of Luke's own special interest in the subject of prayer in the Gospel is a phenomenon to be observed at 3:21; 6:12; 9:18; and 9:28f. At each of these places, Luke reverently takes over Mark's story, and incorporates it in his own.[5] Instead of abbreviating, as he

usually does, in each of these four places Luke actually *adds* a reference to Jesus' praying that was not present in Mark. Thus at 6:12ff. Luke recounts Mark's story of Jesus' selection of the twelve. But where Mark simply states that Jesus 'went up into the hills and called to him those he wanted . . . and appointed twelve', Luke makes it clear that Jesus went into the mountains '*to pray*', and adds that he spent all night in prayer before choosing the twelve. The inference may have been there in Mark (cf. 1:35 and 6:36), but Luke has certainly highlighted both the fact, and the duration, of Jesus' prayer. Similarly, at 9:18ff. Luke takes over Mark's account of Peter's confession of Jesus' messiahship; but he prefixes it with his own assertion that it was '*when Jesus was praying* in private, and his disciples were with him', that Jesus put the all-important questions, 'Who do the crowds say I am?' and 'Who do *you* say I am?' This knowledge could not be derived from Mark. Again, Mark begins the transfiguration story with the words, 'Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them'; Luke's account at the same point reads, 'Jesus . . . took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain *to pray. As he was praying,* the appearance of his face changed'. And finally, in 3:21 we are told that when Jesus was baptised, and *as he was praying,* he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descend. Mark's parallel, once again, does not mention prayer.[6]

These four occasions indicate that Luke has a special interest in prayer, or, more specifically, in *Jesus'* prayer; Luke himself has highlighted the motif by means of his insertions (which, incidentally, is not to say 'his creations'). Together with what we have already noted, they pose the question, 'What was the significance of prayer for Luke?', and they suggest that Luke, of the three Synoptic Evangelists, is likely to offer the sharpest perspective on the subject.

Turning to the Fourth Gospel is like rotating the lenses of a microscope to a higher magnification. As a result there may be less material on prayer directly in view, but its function and significance are more clearly highlighted against the background of a more nuanced theological structure. In John we not only find important and independent teaching of Jesus on the subject, but here, alone amongst the Gospels, we are offered a lengthy prayer of Jesus (Jn. 17); a last prayer which, with the others, uniquely reveals both Jesus' intimacy and unity with the Father, along with his solidarity with his people. No work penetrates the relational nature and the privilege of prayer so beautifully and so profoundly as the Fourth Gospel.

II. PRAYER IN LUKE

As Luke has clearly underscored *Jesus'* prayer, we may start by looking more fully at what he tells us of our Lord's practice and teaching on the matter.

A. Jesus at prayer

Despite Luke's obvious interest in the fact that Jesus prayed, a quick glance at the relevant passages does not tell us quite as much as we should like to know about the manner and circumstances of his praying:

(1) Luke has a highly abbreviated account of the cleansing of the temple (19:45f.) which includes the quotation of Isa. 56:7, 'My house shall be a house of prayer' (but without the Marcan 'for all nations'). This at once points to the central place Jesus believed prayer should take in Israel's worship of God. But it could also suggest Jesus offered an unqualified endorsement of Israel's cultic worship; that he was himself unreservedly committed to it, and to its prayer patterns. That would be to press the evidence of this abbreviated passage too far: Jesus is portrayed as teaching in the temple and the synagogues, not specifically as praying in them. And what he taught was not only to fulfil, but also radically to transform the worship of the people of God.

(2) We learn that Jesus gave thanks to God at the beginning of meals in an act of 'breaking of bread' (Luke 9:16; 22:[17],19; 24:30): this was the typical Jewish, and attractive, response to God which consisted in first blessing God as the Creator, and so as the Provider of bread; then a breaking of the loaf into olive-size pieces which were shared out amongst those present, and finally each eating his piece as a participation in the thanksgiving pronounced by the head of the family.[7]

(3) More significantly, we learn too that Jesus used to withdraw from the exigencies of his ministry for *prolonged periods* of prayer. In drawing attention to this Luke develops a theme already in (*e.g.*) Mark 1:35 (compare the dependent Luke 5:16 and 4:42). On such occasions Jesus goes to a 'lonely place'[8] (Mark 1:35; Luke 4:42; 5:16; cf. 9:18), especially to the mountains (6:12 and 9:28 [for which cf. Mark 6:46]; also 22:39ff. [and note it is said here that it was Jesus' custom to withdraw to the Mount of Olives] and 24:50f., where Jesus' final blessing is located near Bethany, on the flanks of the Mount of Olives [so Acts 1:12]). Perhaps Jesus chose the hills primarily for the privacy they afforded, but for the evangelists their OT and Jewish association with a sense of God's nearness and revelation may also be significant.

The deliberate departure to such locations to pray bespeaks Jesus' intention to commit himself to prolonged and especially serious periods of prayer, and this is further evinced in the mention in Luke 6:12 that at one such time Jesus persisted even through the night in prayer. Just how long Jesus spent on such occasions we do not know, though it is humbling to note that the first and most dramatic such instance was accompanied by a fast of at least forty days (Luke 4:2ff. and pars.)[9].

(4) We learn too of the sheer *intensity* of prayer of which our Lord was capable in the account of his prayer on the Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39–46; specifically 'Gethsemane' in Matthew and Mark). The double warning to the disciples to 'pray so that you will not fall into temptation', which brackets the account (vv.40,46), gives the clue to the signficance of Jesus' own prayer here. *They* would not have been so sorely 'sifted' by Satan in what ensued had they kept awake and prayed in their hour of need for strength to overcome the fears and grief which weakened them, and led to their desertion of Jesus. He, for his part, must face the decisive issue of whether the appalling cup must be his, and whether, knowing its full horror, he is truly willing to drink it; lest later, in the hour of anguish, he may be tempted to take it from his lips unfinished.

The issue could hardly be more momentous; and accordingly we are told Jesus 'threw himself on the ground' (Mark), 'fell on his face' (Matthew) or 'knelt down' (Luke) before the Father in prayer. The three expressions refer

to the same action: that prostration of total obeisance characterised by kneeling and bringing the forehead to touch the ground.[10] In contrast to the usual posture for Jewish prayer — standing — kneeling here expresses something of Jesus' anguish, submission, and engagement in God's purpose against evil, even at terrible cost to himself. The extremity of Jesus' agonising is tellingly portrayed in the traditional reading which included vv.43–44 in chap. 22. Here the writer describes Jesus as being strengthened by an angel in his prayer-struggle (his *agōnia*) for victory in his approaching battle, and goes on to speak of his sweating so profusely in the effort that the sweat ran off him as blood splashes to the ground from a wound (the point of comparison is indeed the flow, not the colour, as Fitzmyer and Marshall rightly argue[11]).

From such engagement we can only stand back in awe; for alas, we find ourselves more often like the disciples who fell asleep instead. The description emphatically declares Jesus' solidarity with our humanity — no beatific vision of the divine nature mutes the thrall of the man Jesus[12] — and, precisely because of this, points to the lesser 'gethsemanes' we may face, and calls us to enter them with Jesus' seriousness and determination in prayer.

(5) Of Jesus' more typical experience and practice of prayer we learn very little, except that Luke regarded prayer as characteristic of him, and at almost any time or place. Thus he notes that Jesus was praying when the Spirit came upon him at the commencement of the ministry, and he prayed too for those involved as they crucified him at the end of the public ministry (23:34 — though there is a textual variant here). His very last act in death was a giving of himself in prayer into the hands of his Father (23:46), and his last act beyond the resurrection and before his removal from this world in the ascension was one of blessing (24:50f.). Within his ministry, his example provoked the disciples to beg, 'Lord, teach us to pray' (11:2).

(6) Paradoxically, one type of situation seems almost to be marked by the *absence* of prayer. Contrary to the assertion by Greeven[13] that Jesus' 'healings and exorcisms are often accompanied by prayer', the fact of the matter is that Luke offers *no* occasion, where Jesus prays with, and for, the sick or the demonised. Typically, rather, he simply commands healing; he rebukes and throws out evil spirits, and he raises the dead with a word (cf. 7:14; 8:54; contrast Peter's raising of Tabitha where Peter is specified as praying first, in Acts 9:40). The precise significance of this is difficult to assess. It is unlikely that Luke considers Jesus' prayer irrelevant to the question of healing and exorcism. More probably a combination of two factors together partially explain the phenomenon: *first*, Luke traces Jesus' power to heal and to exorcise back to the decisive victory over Satan which Jesus won in the 'temptations', and which Jesus can characterise as the assailing and overcoming of the Strong Man[14] which permits his consequent 'liberation' of Satan's spoil (cf. 11:18–23); *secondly*, Luke also possibly sees the times of withdrawal in prayer as determinative for what follows, so that Jesus returns from the place of prayer 'in the power of the Spirit' (cf. 4:14). Similar assumptions seem to lie behind Mark 9:29. Here Jesus explains to the disciples their failure to cast out a demon in terms of the need for prayer (not 'prayer and fasting' as in some ancient manuscripts[15]) for expulsion of this type of demon. Yet Jesus has cast out the demon immediately. We are to assume his *prior* prayer periods here bear their fruit.

As for the usual *content* of Jesus' prayer, this is not very much easier to

determine from Luke: with the exception of the instances just mentioned, we have only Luke 10:21ff. and Luke 23:32, which we now examine in reverse order:

(1) The prayer in Gethsemane is barely typical except at two important points. In the *first* place, its direct 'Father' reflects the knowledge evidenced elsewhere in the Gospel tradition that Jesus addressed God as *Abba* (cf. Mark 14:35), an Aramaic child's address, albeit probably more reverential than our 'daddy'. It would appear Jews were reticent to address God in such direct, immediate and intimate terms, and so the address evinces Jesus' awareness of his special relationship of sonship to God[16] (cf. Luke 10:24f. and par.; Mark 13:32 par. Matthew) — an awareness Luke traces not to Jesus' alleged reception of eschatological sonship in the baptismal reception of the Spirit (*pace* J. D. G. Dunn[17]), but behind that to his childhood (cf. Luke 2:49; and note Luke's underscoring of its deep significance in 2:50a), and based in his virgin conception (1:32f.).[18]

Second, the Gethsemane prayer also expresses Jesus' customary total consecration to the Father's will. The link between the two points just made would be transparent to the Near-Easterner of Jesus' day, if less so to the Westerner of our generation. To acknowledge God as Father, and oneself as true son, was to confess God's claim to true filial obedience. In the Palestine of our Lord, the son (however old he might be) submitted to the father even if he no longer lived in his home.

Although the prayer is offered in circumstances of extremity, or perhaps because of it, this prayer is the light of other prayers. The Father's will that Jesus drink the cup of suffering and death, which is also the 'cup' of God's wrath against man's sin,[19] is something Jesus knows to be his terrible yet God-given destiny, and he has proclaimed it often enough[20] (cf., for example, 9:22–24,31,44; 12:50; 13:33; 18:31–33; 22:19–20,[21] etc.). Yet God's declared will for the future is no deistic fatalism, but what has been mercifully and graciously revealed concerning the intention and promise of one who is *Father.* It leaves an openness that Jesus (aware there are limits on his own knowledge: so Mark 13:32 and parallels) urgently yet reverently explores in the hour of his greatest temptation. Can there be an alternative to the horrific cup of Golgotha and its desolation (cf. Mark 15:34)?[22] In a less dire situation, similarly, Paul comes back to God a second and third time to ask if some suffering may not be spared him that he has already been told once is God's will, even his grace (2 Cor. 12:8–10). And also it is precisely this knowledge that the future, however terrible, is *the Father's* that makes Jesus' prayer 'Nevertheless not my will, but yours be done!' the epitome of responsible filial prayer, not a resigned shrugging of the shoulders and a fatalistic '*Que sera, sera!*'

(2) Luke 10:21–24 has long been a focus of scholarly attention, particularly for the Christological significance of 10:22 (dubbed the 'bolt from the Johannine blue'), which coheres with and elucidates Jesus' use of 'Abba' discussed above. But our interest in the passage is broader than the merely Christological; we are concerned with what it shows about Jesus' prayer.

We may perhaps begin by noting that this is a thanksgiving prayer (similar, in some respects, to [*e.g.*] 1QH 7:26), and that the thanksgiving of Jesus here is no dry formality, the offering of a burdened sense of duty (as ours sometimes is), but rings with joy, marked by the verb *agalliaō* ('be extremely

joyful', 'exult'). The occasion of this rejoicing is the return of the seventy, the success of their ministry and their evident participation in God's inbreaking eschatological reign.

Specifically, the object of his rejoicing, and of his thanksgiving to the Father, appears to be the Holy Spirit. Jesus thanks the Father for the activity of the Holy Spirit in his ministry evinced now in the faith and witness of the seventy. Jesus rejoices not *by* the Spirit (as the verse is usually understood), but *at* the manifestation of the *Holy Spirit's activity*.[23] To be more precise still, the explicit thanksgiving focuses on what is *entailed* by that manifest activity of the Spirit: it shows that God has dramatically proved himself sovereign in salvation in so far as the 'wise' have not been able to grasp the gospel, whereas God has clearly revealed it to and through the uneducated disciples (the 'small children' of v.21: cf. vv.23f.).

Verse 22 now further expands this by affirming God has mediated this revelation (of his inbreaking reign) to the 'small children' *through Jesus*: indeed the revelation so sharply focuses on God-in-*Christ* that it is effectively channelled through the Son. This is the significance of the assertion that the Son has been 'given all things' by the Father, such that the Son uniquely knows the Father. Here we reach the theological and Christological climax[24] of the thanksgiving, and it holds the important corollary stated, namely that the Son is able to *choose* to whom he reveals the Father.

We need to note the apparent paradox here. Jesus thanks the *Father* for revealing 'these things' to the disciples, while *within* the thanksgiving he states that this falls within *his own power of choice*. It may plausibly be argued that the resolution of this paradox lies in Luke's belief that Jesus prays *for* the disciples that God may reveal his inbreaking reign (with its intimate relationship to his own person and work). That is, Jesus' intercession for his disciples is the means by which the Son exercises his 'choice' of those to whom the mystery is revealed — and here Jesus is thanking the Father for *answering* such prayer. It has to be admitted that Luke here does not actually say that Jesus is thanking God for answered prayer, as such; but it may reasonably be deduced from what he says at 9:18 and 9:28 in their respective contexts.[25]

In the first of these, it will be remembered, Luke sets Jesus' question 'Who do you say I am?', and Peter's answer (the key Christological confession), in the immediate context of Jesus' *praying* alone, and their being *with* him. The connection is surely deliberate and is intended to suggest that it is *Jesus' prayer that enables the confession* (cf. Matthew 16:17 where Jesus says 'Blessed are you, Simon . . . for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven').[26] The reason that Herod cannot begin to answer the question 'Who is this?' (9:9), and the crowds cannot answer it correctly (9:19), *while Peter can*, is to be found in Jesus' praying.

Similarly, at 9:28ff., Jesus' prayer seems to be directly related to a disclosure of his glory to the inner circle of the disciples, such as answers to the promise in 9:27 that some standing there will not taste death till they 'see' the kingdom of God.[27]

(3) In Luke 22:31f., Jesus' prayer appears to be presented as part of his role as advocate for his disciples: on their behalf he opposes the accusatory and destructive counsels of Satan in the heavenly court.[28] Thus, Jesus tells Peter — as representative of the disciples (for the 'you' is plural) — that Satan has demanded authority to sift them. In the Lucan perspective the demand

has not been refused, but it is mitigated; for Jesus relates that he has prayed that Simon's faith ('you' singular now) will not be totally eclipsed, and that he will repent (if that is the meaning) and subsequently strengthen his brothers. The reader will hardly doubt that Jesus' prayer will prevail, and the narrative does not disappoint such expectation. If the 'Gethsemane' exhortations to the disciples to pray lest they enter into temptation stress the human responsibility in perseverance (albeit even there to depend upon God's grace; hence prayer), this scene reminds the reader that human determination is only one dimension of the picture. God's initiative in salvation extends not merely to the sending of his Son, but to the self-disclosure and spiritual illumination for which the Son prays, and to the power to persevere for which he intercedes.

Before turning to Jesus' teaching on prayer let us simply summarise the position so far. Jesus certainly gave thanks to God, both for provision (*e.g.* of food), and especially also for what the Father was accomplishing through him. More than this, we know that (for Luke) Jesus' life was characterised by prayer; that he occasionally withdrew for extended periods of prayer, and that in prayer he expressed his experience of God as 'Abba', Father, and his own consecration to him in filial obedience. While praying he received empowering to proclaim the messianic liberation (3:21; 4:16ff.), and to overcome Satan's 'temptations' (4:2–13), and through these, and the consequent 'binding of the Strong Man', he was able to master Satan's 'household' and liberate his captives (11:20–23). Similarly, it was in prayer that he received revelation (3:21; cf 9:30[?]; 10:18[?]; 22:31[?]) and sustaining power to overcome the Gethsemane temptation (22:43–4). Beyond these, Jesus' prayer is seen as the immediate means of God's elective revelation of the Son (through the Spirit with Jesus), the mode by which he acts as advocate against Satan on the church's behalf, and specifically as a means by which the church perseveres. The Gospel closes with Jesus' priestly blessing of the church (24:50f.), but the content of the blessing is not disclosed.

B. Jesus' teaching on prayer

The core of Jesus' teaching is given in ch. 11 in response to the disciples' request, 'LORD, teach us to pray', and in the parables in ch. 18. Other scattered material is embraced either by Jesus' example (*e.g.*, just as he prays for those who crucify him, so he teaches his followers that they should pray for those who curse and mistreat them [6:28]) or by perspectives already discussed. So we may turn straight to the material in chapter 11.

1. Luke 11:2–4: The Disciples' Prayer

Pride of place belongs to what is usually called 'the LORD's Prayer', but which might better be called 'the Disciples' Prayer'.[29] For Jesus gives this prayer to them as an example (and not necessarily more than this, despite the *hotan* ['whenever'] of v.2)[30] of what they may pray. And there is no evidence that Jesus himself used it — and were there such, then in the light of the petition for forgiveness of sin which the prayer includes, we would require a certain recasting of traditional theology!

Two forms of the prayer have come to us in the NT. Luke's is considerably shorter than the more familiar Matthean version. His text probably ran[31]:

2. Father!
   May your name be sanctified!
   May your kingdom come!
3. Give us each day the bread we need.
4. Forgive us our sins
   for we too forgive everyone who sins against us.
   And bring us not to enter into temptation.

Both forms are traditional and quite possibly both go back to Jesus' teaching in different circumstances.[32] Our account concentrates on Luke's version.

The prayer begins with a direct and unqualified address of God as 'Father'. The word '*abba*', preserved in the early Christian patterns of addressing God (cf. Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:15) is what lies behind the Greek here (as in Jesus' own prayer discussed above). The direct address '*abba*' was startling enough on his lips, and its extension to the disciples is more so. This access to God as 'Father', however, is not to be construed as a natural right (through creation), nor as a mark of Israel's election (and so a privilege accorded to Jews); it is bound up with that spiritual 'hearing' of the message of God's fatherly, liberating, reconciling and loving grace — announced by Jesus, and revealed in him — which draws a person into discipleship. The disciple addresses God as *abba,* not in his own right, but by virtue of his standing in relationship to the Son in whom the Father is revealed (cf. 10:22). In the language of later debates, Jesus' sonship is incorporative, and our right to address God as '*abba*' depends on it; or, in Pauline terms, we cry '*abba*' through the Spirit of his Son in us.[33] As with Jesus, the disciple's declaration of God as '*abba*' is simultaneously his recognition of God's right to his true and total filial obedience.

The first two requests may probably be taken together (along too with the Matthean 'Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven'). Both, or rather all three, are primarily a plea that God will act so decisively in judgment and salvation that his glory will be unveiled, and all (as a result) be enabled to see him as the holy, almighty King he truly is.[34] It is thus a prayer for the End, for the consummation of the kingdom of God, and for the bringing into being of the new earth and new heavens that the End entails. But as Jesus spoke of that eschatological reign having already dawned (cf. Luke 11:20, etc.[35]), the Disciples' Prayer is simultaneously, though secondarily, a prayer for the fuller measure of realisation of God's reign within the horizons of the one who prays; either in respect of particular aspects of his world (the success of the disciples' mission, the overcoming of some specific problem [*e.g.* opposition, or misunderstanding, his own fight with sin, etc.]), or more generally. These petitions, like the prayer address, challenge the integrity of the one who prays. A man cannot lightly invoke God to come as King, Saviour and Judge, yet at the same time consciously linger in sin and self-centred living. More positively, the '*abba*' address and the two first petitions give his life and his praying the right priorities: he is less likely to pray frivolously or selfishly if he has first, and meaningfully, called God 'Father', and begged him to bring his kingdom.

The third request, the petition for 'bread' (a Jewish idiom for food more generally), has been taken in the same way as the first two by some scholars. The translation given above excludes the possibility, but the underlying

Greek has been taken to mean 'the bread for tomorrow', *i.e.* the bread which belongs to the messianic feast. The prayer in Matthew then amounts to 'give us today the blessings belonging to the messianic age', and its similarity to the earlier petitions is evident. The ambiguous adjective round which the debate hinges is *epiousia*. Here it most likely carries either the sense 'for [our] existence/being', or (linguistically more probably) 'pertaining to the coming day' (as seen from the perspective of the beginning of the day), and so (on either interpretation) means something like 'the food we need'.[36] The request is a recognition of God's ability and intention, as Creator and King, to provide for his children's needs with fatherly care — whether in blessing the fruits of their labours, or, as in the disciples' missions, in the provision of hospitality by the communities they serve in the proclamation of the gospel (9:3ff.; 10:4ff.). As Carson notes, 'The prayer is for our needs, not our greeds.'[37] Its wording reflects the economic insecurity, and the need for day-to-day dependence on God for provision, of those living in the oppressive, hand-to-mouth economic conditions of first-century workers, who were forced daily to seek reemployment (conditions which persist for many today).

The fourth request reminds the disciple of two things: *first* that he serves a holy God with respect to whose lavish grace he cannot afford to be presumptuous; *second*, that the call of the gospel has a corporate dimension. The third to fifth petitions accordingly are in the first person plural. In the Gospel, as the author of Ephesians was later to make so clear, God is overcoming not merely the vertical alienation between man and God, but also the horizontal alienation between man and fellow man. The world, fragmented through sin, is brought into cosmic unity in Christ (cf. Eph. 1:10; 2:11–22). The disciples' request for forgiveness can only have any integrity at all (and only under such circumstances can they have any confidence of being heard[38]) if they extend to their brothers and sisters, willingly and sympathetically, the very kind of mercy they seek for themselves.[39]

The fifth petition, which sounds odd to English ears (the more so after reading James 1:13f.) involves several Hebraisms. To 'enter into temptation' means 'to yield to temptation' (cf. 4QFlor 1:8) and the negative ('. . . bring us *not* to enter into temptation') qualifies the idea of 'entry', or 'yielding to temptation'. The whole thus means 'cause us not-to-succumb to temptation' rather than 'do not cause us to succumb to temptation'.[40] This petition reminds the disciple of the need to be watchful, and to depend on God's grace to persevere against the onslaughts of evil. The substance of the prayer is thus that to which Jesus exhorts the disciples in Gethsemane (22:40, 46; cf. 21:36).

2. *Luke 11:5–8: The parable of the friend at midnight*

This parable uses humour to reinforce some of the points made in the Disciples' Prayer, and to fix them in the mind and heart. The situation envisaged is that a man has an unexpected visitor who has journeyed at night (possibly to avoid the heat), and arrived late. The host knows it is his culturally-expected responsibility to offer generous hospitality, but his larder does not rise to the occasion, and the shops (if there are any) are shut. No matter; the Near-Eastern reader knows too that the host's responsibilities are shared with the whole community. The host will know who most recently baked bread, and who has the other items he will need; and so he will go

round the village from house to house collecting his various requirements. Shame would come upon the whole village — not just on himself — if he offers mere subsistence; hence, *e.g.*, the request for three loaves: even one of the large Palestinian loaves will be too much for the guest, but the host would not dream of offering just one.[41]

Who in such a situation, Jesus asks, would expect not merely a villager but actually a friend to try to fob him off with silly excuses about a bolted door and sleeping children? The cultural expectation is clear: 'No friend, nor for that matter anyone else in the village, would ever dream of such a thing!' This expectation is conveyed in the very form in which Jesus asks the question ('Which of you . . .' here as elsewhere invites the response 'Certainly none'),[42] and the excuses would simply be seen as humorous: is the man too weak to open the door? Will the poor little dears not fall straight back to sleep again if they are stirred?! And what matter if they don't: the first duty is clearly to provide for the guest who has arrived! Jesus himself provides the expected answer, once again tinged with humour: Well, the erstwhile sleeper might not get up for the best of motives (Is it not his friend at the window?), but he certainly will not be able to bear the shame of the village gossip the next day when news gets round that he shrugged off the sacred duty of hospitality with such feeble excuses! So he will comply with the request 'for the sake of his (own) shamelessness (*anaideia*), that is to say, that he might not lose face in the matter'.[43] The translations and interpretations that make *anaideia* refer to the host, rather than as here to the sleeping friend, require the word to mean either 'persistence', 'importunity' (which it does *not* mean, and which is not suggested in the story: the host asks but once), or 'shamelessness' in the sense of impudence in making the request at all. But neither can be the point; culturally the request is more than reasonable, and the very form of Jesus' question (as we noted above) assumes the verdict 'The situation of such a refusal could not happen!' even *before* Jesus goes on to supply the reason why the host will get what he asks for, and so before *anaideia* is mentioned.

Jesus' hearers would be forced to grin at the thought of the grouchy 'friend' wearily having to supply what was needed lest his name become mud. In exactly the same way, the disciple must remember that when he brings his needs to God (providing they are legitimate *needs*) *God's* honour is at stake if he does not answer; so he will! And neither does sleep make him too weary, nor has he children to disturb when he responds!

3. Luke 11:9–13: Proverbs of assurance and the simile of the father and the child

The three-fold exhortation to keep asking, seeking, and knocking (in prayer), is grounded in the certainty that whoever (v.10 *pas ho . . .*) does so is answered, eventually finds, and has the door opened to him. The assurance at least works in the negative sense that without asking, etc., receiving is improbable (cf. Jas. 4:2 'You do not have, because you do not ask'). In the positive sense it provides a rule of thumb; God delights to answer the prayer of his people. Over against a Jewish eschatological pessimism that was inclined to expect too little from God in 'this evil age', Jesus' message to the

disciples is, Ask; for now you shall receive. It is a message which springs straight out of the gospel of God's inbreaking reign — the dawn of that saving liberating rule is precisely what guarantees that whoever (as a disciple) now asks shall receive. This proverb of assurance is not, of course, a rigid guarantee; the art of the proverb is useful generalisation, not universal truth. Asking of the wrong sort will certainly not receive from a holy God (cf. Jas. 4:3 'When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives'); God gives only good gifts — a point emphasised in the simile which follows.

Two fairly distinct forms of the simile are known to us. In Matthew's, the point is straightforward encouragement to the disciple to take his requests in prayer to his heavenly Father with every confidence God will answer. After all, no human father when approached by his child with a request for bread or fish would mockingly turn down the request — by serving up a stone (which looks like bread, but is inedible) or a 'snake' (eel? *barbût*?) that looks like a fish but cannot be eaten because it is levitically unclean.[44] Just as even a sinful human father delights to give his children good gifts, so much more does the Father in heaven. But Luke's account is more complex. The sort of father that might give a son a serpent instead of a fish and a scorpion instead of an egg would not merely be despicable, but pathologically evil — setting before his child what anyone would recognise as dangerous animals.[45] Luke's version therefore insists God will give only *good* gifts, *not* evil ones.

But in what context does such an affirmation make sense? We must remember that in 10:19 Jesus has already used this combination of serpent and scorpion for evil spirits (over which the disciples have been given power). And we should note that the passage which *follows* the simile concerns the accusation that Jesus exorcised by the power of Beelzebul and is introduced by the words, 'and he was casting out demons . . .' (11:14ff.). Putting these two observations together, we should probably infer that the simile itself is intended to assure the disciples that when they ask God for his power in their mission alongside Jesus, the power they receive will not be an *evil* spirit. God is sure rather to give them 'a *good* spirit',[46] i.e. a share in the Holy Spirit by which Jesus is anointed. In other words, the particular form of the saying in Luke springs out of a context in the mission alongside Jesus in which the disciples, as their Lord, were being accused of working by evil powers.[47]

4. *Luke 17:5–6: Asking with faith*

To the disciples' request that Jesus increase their faith, the Lord replies that even if they had the smallest grain of faith they could command the plucking up of the deep-rooted *fig-mulberry*[48] and its replanting in the sea! Matthew preserves a very similar saying in 17:20 that speaks instead of shifting a mountain.[49] Both are metaphors in Judaism for the accomplishment of a variety of kinds of impossible or near-impossible tasks.[50] The point of Jesus' reply is apparently that the disciples do not need merely 'additional' faith, but faith of a different kind however little it be — for (at least in this instance) they do not even have the least amount (that the size of a mustard seed: cf. Mk. 4:31!) of the required sort.

It is not clear in Luke to what the discussion pertains, but in Matthew the context is the disciples' question as to why they had proved unable to cast out

a particular demon. Jesus replies that it is because of their poor faith (*oligopistia*). The Greek here must mean 'poor faith' — *i.e.* faith of the wrong kind — rather than 'little faith' (as etymology might wrongly suggest), for otherwise Jesus' answer, that they only need the very least faith, would barely make sense. A not dissimilar teaching is preserved in Mark 11:22–24 par. Mt. 21:20–21, again in reference to a miraculous working (the cursing of the fig-tree). As the sayings in Matthew and Mark are so clearly embedded in a context of 'charismatic working' (and so Paul: cf. 1 Cor. 13:2) it would be unwise to take Luke differently.[51]

But what is the force of Jesus' teaching in this and in the related sayings? Mark's wording, which highlights a faith that does not doubt (11:23 par. Mt. 21:21), has probably been misunderstood to place the emphasis on the human responsibility to strive to believe God's promises. The key to answered prayer (it is suggested) is banishing any doubts, and holding fast the conviction that God *shall* grant the request. The precise wording of Mk. 11:24 — 'believe that you *have* received it, and it will be yours' — is even pressed to mean (*e.g.*) 'Believe you have already been healed (even if the symptoms are still all there!), and what has 'truly' already happened ('spiritually'? 'mystically'?) will become an observable reality'. This pastorally dangerous advice rests on an entirely unsupported interpretation of the saying. Rather, what the disciple is called to believe, before the relevant event comes to pass in history, is that God's royal 'Yes' has been received with respect in the petition, and that as a consequence it will be fulfilled.

The key issue then becomes: how can a disciple know that a particular request has been granted in advance of seeing the fulfilment? With respect to some requests he might be expected to deduce God's (virtually certain) approval on the basis of his understanding of Scripture (*e.g.* from the OT he may deduce that God forgives the repentant sinner, and so have confidence that his own penitent request for forgiveness is liable to be granted); but such general considerations would not pertain to more specific matters, to the uprooting of 'this fig-tree' or to the casting of 'that mountain' into the sea. And the disciples believed in this general sense (and on the basis of their own experience to that point) that they could exorcise the boy with the dumb spirit (Mk. 9:14–29) — to no avail. When the disciples asked for an explanation of their failure, Jesus told them (by implication) that they lacked the right *kind* (rather than 'quantity') of faith.

An attractive alternative is that the 'faith' which knows that God grants (or has granted) a particular request is *charismatic* faith; that is, a direct revelation or witness of the Spirit on the issue. Such an interpretation is certainly consonant with Jesus' affirmation that only a tiny faith is required (because the fulfilment of the petition in history, or the empowering of the uttered command to bring about what is spoken, depends on the intent revealed by God, not on human striving to believe). It may also make sense of the exhortation to believe *without doubt*, for such belief is precisely possible where it is felt God has spoken specifically to the issue. On this view, then, the charismatic utterance of power ('Say to this mountain. . .') or (alternatively) the 'prayer of faith' is assured because God himself has indicated his intention.

If this interpretation is along the right lines, we have a parallel in Jesus' teaching to the miraculous charisma of faith which is occasionally given to

some members of the body, according to (*e.g.*) 1 Corinthians 12:9. And the point of the teaching is not a summons to screw up enough faith to accomplish great acts, but to be in that relation of prayer with the Father within which he graciously reveals his will and purposes. But in addition to the more particular view just elucidated, a slightly more general understanding of Lk. 17:5f. is possible in the context of Luke-Acts. Luke describes certain individuals as 'full of the Holy Spirit and of faith' (*e.g.* Acts 6:5; 11:24). By such a description Luke signifies people whose lives are characterised by the rich activity of the Spirit and by a faith which is moulded by their experience of the Spirit. Luke may well have understood that a Stephen or a Barnabas lived in such prayerful unity with God that their petitions were *already* usually in accord with God's will, and that they would know almost intuitively (an intuition informed by the Spirit) when they asked outside God's purpose.

5. *Luke 18:1–14: The parables of the importunate widow and the two men praying*

Neither of these is *primarily* a parable concerning general principles of prayer. In the latter, the point of the parable focuses less on the praying as such and more on the attitudes underlying the prayer — specifically the Pharisee's guilt in thinking himself righteous while he actually despises those outside his circle, especially such as the tax-collector (18:9b), and the latter's 'righteousness' in throwing himself on God's mercy. Nevertheless, the parable serves as a warning — not least to those of us who (unlike the original hearers[52]) tend to despise the Pharisee! — that the haughty cannot approach God. If our attitude to our fellow men is not moulded by the good news of reconciliation and loving acceptance, we may forfeit the very access to the Father which lies at its heart (cf. Mt. 5:23f.; 18:23–35).

The parable of the Importunate Widow[53] is more directly focused on prayer, but addresses a very specific situation of it. The parable provides a conclusion to the section of Jesus' teaching on the End-times, a section which began in 17:22. Its point is not to invite importunity on any and every matter of prayer, but to encourage those living through the final tribulation to persist in prayer (not to be overwhelmed and give up hope) — lest, when the Lord come, he find faith abandoned (18:1,8b). To disciples in the day of the fierce trials which herald the End, everything may seem to be against them, and God remote; the temptation is simply to give up. In such circumstances they are to think of the widow. Everything is against her too. She is suffering injustice at the hand of another, and demanding the court to take up her case. Yet as a woman her place is not in court at all. It is considered exclusively a male forum, a woman being represented by her husband or nearest male relative. So even a *respectable* Near-Eastern judge might not be expected to take any notice of her voice amongst the crowd, all yelling to have their cases heard first. But she has no husband, and evidently no adult male in the family to defend her cause. And worse, the judge is himself unjust and (it is to be assumed) in the pay of the adversary.[54] There is no hope for her — except in her persistence. The judge eventually concedes, and hears her case, so as not to be worn out with her shrieking her cause every day. Much more then shall God hasten to vindicate his elect in their cry for final justice.

While the parable clearly speaks first and foremost to the End-time tribulation, Luke expects his reader to see its relevance not merely to the

End, but to those various circumstances in the life of the church or of the individual which mirror that trial, in the ferocity of the assailing powers and in the apparent hopelessness of the situation. The watchword remains the same: pray at all times — the Lord shall hasten to vindicate his elect. But when he comes will he find faith?

6. *Prayer in the gospel of Luke: Further perspectives*

The core of Luke's material on prayer has now been presented. There are further isolated sayings, but these fall for the main part within the perspectives explored.

The theme of jubilant thanksgiving for God's power at work, introduced with respect to 10:21ff., is certainly a theme Luke emphasises elsewhere:[55] in 19:37f., as Jesus and the disciples approach Jerusalem, descending from the Mount of Olives, 'the whole crowd of disciples' are described as bursting into loud praise of God concerning the mighty works they have seen, and shouting the psalmic blessing of the king who comes in the name of the Lord (cf. Ps. 118:26). The language of the description is strongly Lucan, and immediately reminiscent of the birth narratives. There we frequently encounter exuberant praise offered to God because of his saving intervention in the conception and birth of John and especially of Jesus, as God's Saviour and Messiah: 1:46–55 (Mary's exultation); 1:68–79 (Zechariah's eulogy); 2:14 (the angelic praise; echoed by the shepherds, 2:20), and 2:29–32 (Simeon's praise; and cf. 2:38).[56]

Luke regards these praises as inspired speech (cf. explicitly of Zechariah at 1:67), and possibly meant their joyful celebrations of the inbreaking of God's promised redemption to afford an example of the type of praises disciples might offer to God (cf. the echoes of 2:14 in 19:38). We should beware, however, of hustling Mary, Zechariah, Simeon and these simple shepherds into the political arena, or crowning Jesus' mother with laurels as theologian of the poor.[57] Mary's language of the poor, the hungry, and the humble oppressed in 1:51–4 is not primarily literal language, but the use of traditional metaphors to designate *Israel-in-her-need-of-salvation* whom God now mercifully rescues, and for whom he inaugurates a messianic jubilee (so also at Lk. 6:20–26; 4:16ff.). And the oppressive 'rich', the well-fed, the 'proud' and the 'mighty' are not primarily referring expressions for those who are socio-economically and literally these things, but traditional metaphors for Israel's oppressive enemies (spiritual and temporal).[58] Thanksgiving is offered, then, to the God who has heard the cry of the people of God. And the liberation he brings, though not first and foremost politico-economic, is no less real, nor its joy less full, than that which is brought by food to the hungry, release to the afflicted, and the happy sight (to the oppressed) of at last seeing justice done. That is the point of the metaphor. The real *referent* of the language of liberation is a new freedom from the spiritual powers which enslave in sin (and deeper demonic bondages: cf. the exorcisms),[59] and freedom from the attendant alienation from God and from fellow human beings. God's inbreaking 'reign' ultimately is a deepening of his reconciling and restoring presence[60] in individuals who thereby come to know him as Father and the people of God as their brothers and sisters.

Jesus' exhortation to the disciples to pray the Lord of the harvest to send workers out into his harvest field (10:2 par. Mt. 9:37) similarly expresses in

teaching a theme which we have noted elsewhere to be highlighted by his narrative: God's sovereignty in bringing salvation and (simultaneously) man's responsibility to pray concerning it. His special interest in this theme comes to relatively clear focus in the observation that Luke has a tendency specifically to mention human engagement in prayer at, or just before, what are quite clearly turning points in redemptive history.[61] Thus it is while the whole people are praying (1:10; cf. 1:13) that the great announcement of the dawn of salvation is made to Zechariah; it is while Jesus is praying that the Spirit which empowers the proclamation of the good news descends upon him (3:21); it is after he prays that he chooses the twelve who were to become the core or foundation of the Israel of fulfilment (6:12); again, it is after he prays that they make the all-important confession of his messiahship (9:18); actually while he is praying that the disciples are afforded a glimpse of his End-time glory (9:28ff.), and he prepares to tread the path towards Jerusalem and death; and it is after prayer in Gethsemane that he faces the ordeal of the cross. We shall notice that this theme is developed even more strongly in Acts.

III. PRAYER IN ACTS

The church in Acts is a church of prayer. To that extent, at very least, the example of Jesus' prayer-life is seen to have had its effect.[62] Thus the church begins its post-resurrection life in prayer (1:14 [cf. 1:24]), and the first summary underscores the church as a praying community (2:42). The church naturally continues to offer God thanks over bread, as Jesus did, at the beginning of a meal (27:35), and its apostles attend the temple at the hours of prayer (3:1: cf. also 22:17 and 21:27ff.). Prayer had become typical too in conversion-initiation, which can thus be described in the language of Joel 3:5 as 'calling upon the name of the LORD' (2:21; cf. 9:14,21; 15:17; 22:16). Mediatorial prayer, associated with laying on of hands, is also not uncommon. It is associated with this initial turning to God, especially in praying for its related Spirit-reception (8:15,17; 19:6); but it is also found in different types of commissioning (6:6; 13:3; 14:23), and in healing (9:11; 28:8). In these instances the laying on of hands appears to symbolise the sharing or transfer of authority of power in and through the Spirit.

The prayer-life of the young church is by no means to be conceived as merely conventional. The fasting associated with the commissioning of Saul and Barnabas (13:3), and with the appointment of 'elders' in the churches of South Galatia (14:23) points to the seriousness with which these occasions of prayer are approached. Similarly we find Peter *prostrating* himself[63] in urgent prayer alone before he speaks the life-giving words over Tabitha (9:40), and later the church earnestly prays for the release of Peter from jail (12:5,12).

Likewise, Paul's fervency in prayer is indicated when he, with the whole congregation of elders assembled at Troas, *kneels* in supplication at the end of his solemn address to them, and as he prepares to leave them for the last time (20:36; cf. also 21:5). Prayer is not regarded merely as important, but as an apostolic *priority*; the seven are chosen so that the apostles will not be distracted from their prayer and their 'service of the word' (6:2–4). And later in Acts Paul, with Silas, can be found engaged in prayer and singing to God

even at midnight, in a Philippian jail, as the two of them recover from their beating at the hand of the city's overhasty magistrates (16:25). As for Stephen, he follows his Master's footsteps in prayer not merely in the surrender of his spirit to God at the end (7:59), but in his final act of prostrating himself and crying out to God to be merciful to his executioners (7:59f.).

Luke's narrative in Acts exemplifies the exhortations and promises in relation to prayer in the Gospel; those who ask receive. This is made most explicit in 4:24–31; 8:14–17; and 12:5–16. In the first of these, the church, beginning to taste persecution, turns to God in prayer. She acknowledges him as the sovereign Creator, and as the one who both foretold the great opposition to his Anointed and yet sovereignly achieved his purposes through it (4:25–28). The same Lord is then besought to empower the church and give it fresh courage. This prayer is answered in the shaking of the very place in which they pray, and in a new filling with the Holy Spirit which leads in turn to renewed boldness in proclamation (4:31; cf. 6:4,7; where the apostolic prayer is to be understood as prayer for the propagation of the gospel). Similarly, in 12:5–16, Luke emphasises that Peter's release from prison is the answer to the church's fervent prayer by bracketing the account of his miraculous release by statements concerning the fervent petition of the church (12:5,12). The humorous description of the church's slowness to recognise the answer (12:13ff.) only serves to underscore the divine gracious faithfulness in God's response to their prayers. The point of this story (and of 16:25ff.) is not that God always rescues the believer from disaster. Far less is it that he makes the believer's pathway through life comfortable in answer to prayer, for Stephen and James (in the immediate context), and later Paul (beyond the close of Luke's account; but prepared for in it),[64] suffer martyrdom. On the contrary, the Christian may know from God that the path ahead of him leads to suffering and probably death (so for Paul: 20:23; 21:4f.; 21:12f.). The point is rather that God may be expected even dramatically to answer that asking, seeking and knocking which is based in a God-given sense of the divine will (cf. Mk. 11:24, etc.).

Four features of the broader context of prayer in Acts require special attention:

First, the church is identified as 'the Israel of fulfilment' to whom the God of Israel is committed and amongst whom he is bringing his ancient promises to pass, promises that include the blessing of the Gentiles (cf. Acts 3:25f.; 15:14–19; 28:28; Lk. 2:30ff., etc.).[65] The church thus naturally expects her God to intervene, and to demonstrate his salvation in and through her in a way that anticipates God's end-time glory (as indeed this began to happen in Jesus' ministry).

Second, the prayers the church offers are now *Christocentric.* The church attributes to Jesus what Israel identified as divine prerogatives: he is the Saviour (4:12); the 'author of life' (3:15; 5:31), the one who grants repentance and forgiveness (5:31), and the coming 'Judge' (10:42, etc.). The church has been bought through his blood (20:27f.), and, most significantly, he is now acknowledged as the Lord who gives the divine Spirit (2:33), and so as the one Lord on whose name (in Joel's terms) men are to call for salvation (2:17–39). Prayer can thus even be offered *to* him by Stephen (7:59) and Ananias (9:10–16). Jesus' ministry, his death and resurrection, and his Lordship over

the Spirit experienced in the church as the Spirit of Christ, have together unveiled his true glory and his unity with the Father.[66]

Third, the Spirit of prophecy promised by Joel — that is, the 'organ of communication' between God (and with him the ascended Christ) and his people — is now poured out on all disciples, enabling visions and dreams (*e.g.* 7:55; 9:10–18; 10:10–20; 16:9–10; 18:9–10, etc.), and revelatory or prophetic utterance and charismatic wisdom (*e.g.* 10:19; 13:2; 6:9f. [cf. Lk. 21:15!]; 5:3 and 16:7, etc.). which guide the church and give power to her witness to the Lord.[67] The Spirit thus understood is not merely the means of Jesus' directing and empowering the church. He is also probably to be understood as enabling that less cognitively distinct, but nevertheless very real sense of the presence of God (or of the risen Lord) that both makes prayer a living communion and subtly directs the one who prays in the knowledge of the Lord's will. At times this same Spirit is experienced as such an overwhelming wave of God's glory and benefits that prophetic praise or tongues breaks out amongst his people (2:4,11; 10:46; 19:6).[68] The Spirit is thus manifest as the ground of entirely new possibilities of prayer.

Fourth, perhaps the most commented-upon aspect of the prayer-motif in Luke-Acts appears in a more global overview of his handling of the theme. What is striking is that at almost every important turning point in the narrative of God's redemptive action we find a mention of prayer. Thus, the choice of Matthias to replace Judas in the twelve, the foundation of the Israel of fulfilment, is preceded by prayer (1:24); it is while the 120 are gathered together in prayer (1:14) that the promise of the Spirit is fulfilled on the day of Pentecost; the martydom of Stephen which leads to the scattering of the church and the consequent spread of the Gospel (8:1,4; 11:19) was attended by prayer; Peter and John must pray before the Samaritans (the first converts outside the nation of Israel proper) can receive the Spirit as a seal of their acceptance of the Gospel proclaimed by Philip to them (8:14–17); immediately prior to his healing and baptism at the hands of Ananias, and thus at the beginning of his great God-given task, Paul is described as praying and receiving a fresh vision (9:11f.) — and a visionary experience in prayer in the temple later confirms his calling especially to the Gentiles (related at 22:17); Cornelius, the first Gentile to be converted in Luke's account, receives, while he is praying, an angelic vision commanding him to send for Peter (10:30 — and in response to his earlier prayers [10:4]); and it is while Peter is praying that he receives the epochal vision of clean and unclean animals that opens the path for him to go to this and subsequent Gentiles with the Gospel (10:9ff.; cf. 10:34f.). Similarly it is while the Antioch church is worshipping God in prayer and fasting that the Spirit indicates they should set aside Paul and Barnabas for what proves to be a decisive mission to Galatia (13:2–3), after which the Gentiles will form a major part in the church. The two missionaries are then commissioned with prayer (13:3). The theme is pursued with more restraint in the chapters which follow, but it remains clear.

Luke-Acts thus presents us with a bold double canvas of the early church in which the most significant redemptive-historical acts of God are portrayed as taking place in a context of prayer, revealed in advance to someone praying, or — in roughly half the instances — actually cast as the Lord's response to his people's prayer. This portrayal is never in danger of suggesting that the true initiative in salvation-history lies in believers, in their determination to pray

for specific events to come to pass. God is only fulfilling what he long before promised. Such decisive acts of God as (*e.g.*) the descent of the Spirit on Jesus, on the disciples at Pentecost, and at Cornelius's home, take place in a context of prayer, but not obviously as an immediate response to a specific request for the same. Nevertheless, without answering questions of cause and effect, the whole tableau gives a unified picture of the close relationship between prayer and God's decisive acts of salvation, right up to the parousia (Lk. 18:1ff.). Luke-Acts as a whole thus constitutes a powerful encouragement and prophetic call to the church to be a church of prayer: not just to pray for its own perseverance as the people of God under pressure in this age, and for salvation at the end (so Ott); but for continual faithfulness in witness to the gospel now, and for fresh inbreakings of God's grace and power now, such as point to the mercy, glory and power of the ascended Lord until he comes.

It is difficult adequately to summarise Luke's teaching on prayer in Luke-Acts. All attempts to reduce it to a single motif are soon enough discovered for the reductionism they are. It is true Luke's portrayal of Jesus' prayer-life is 'biographical', and depicts him as a man of piety, but it is more than that, as Ott, Harris and O'Brien have shown. It is true too that Jesus' prayer-life is offered as an example (cf. 11:1; 22:39–46!), but Luke does not develop this aspect in detail, nor does it exhaust the Lucan perspective either. We may partly agree further with Ott that prayer in Luke is especially 'prayer for salvation' (cf. esp. 18:1ff.; also 11:2–4; 21:36; 22:39ff.), but it is also thanksgiving and praise, and petition for provision of daily needs. It is indeed, too, prayer for the kingdom and the Spirit (with Dunn and Smalley — though not in the way they understand the relationship)[69] but more besides. Harris is right to maintain that in Luke (and more especially in Acts) prayer is the means to revelation, but not just for oneself; Jesus' prayer is the occasion of revelation to himself, but also to others, and there are plenty of examples of mediatorial prayer. For Luke prayer is, too (to borrow a phrase from von Baer) 'the driving force of salvation history', but, as O'Brien would agree, not exclusively; and certainly not in a way that threatens the sovereignty of God's initiative. The texture of Luke's portrait of prayer is too exotic to sum up in any epigram; for him prayer is not a technique for achieving some object or goal, it is man relating every aspect of his life (and that of his neighbour) to God and to his gracious salvific will and purposes freshly revealed in the good news.

IV. PRAYER IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

A. Introduction

John's witness adds fresh perspective and new depth to the themes already raised in Matthew, Mark and Luke. We have observed that in the Synoptic accounts, Jesus' prayer brings to expression his filial obedience (focused in his addressing God as 'Abba' and in his willingness even to drink the terrible cup, if it be the Father's will), and through prayer 'all things' have been revealed *to* the Son who in turn reveals the Father (Lk. 10:22) — especially the dawn of his End-time rule. John extends the horizons of our vision on each of these points.

In the first place, John provides a new dimension to our understanding of Jesus' prayer to God as *Father*. For it is in his Gospel that Jesus is unambiguously revealed as the Son who lived in pre-existent glory, united with the Father in love (1:1ff.; 17:5,24). In the Synoptic Gospels Jesus' 'sonship' to God might be understood (or misunderstood) to point to little more than the representative and royal 'sonship' of one who was Israel's messianic king (cf. 2 Sam. 7:14f.; Ps. 2:7, etc.), though there is clear evidence of a more absolute meaning in Lk. 10:22 and Mk. 13:32. In John, what is but glimpsed in the wings of the Synoptic accounts is naturally moved to the very centre of the stage; for John's very purpose is to demonstrate from Jesus' words and acts that he is the divine Son in whom to believe is life (cf. 20:30f.).[70] In John, Jesus is *the* Son, co-author of creation and of life (1:3ff.), sent forth from the Father as the very expression of his wisdom and being, and so the ultimate revelation of his glory and grace (so 1:1–18). As the *Logos* who was *alongside* God in creation (1:1) he is nevertheless also God (1:1; 20:28), and, out of his intimate eternal union, 'God the only Son'[71] can truly reveal the Father (1:18).

To this unity, ultimately, must be traced the fact that to see Jesus is to see the Father (14:9; 12:45); to know Jesus is to know the Father (14:7); to believe in him is to believe in the Father who sent him (12:44) — Jesus and the Father are emphatically *one*[72] (10:30; cf. 17:11). But this does not mean John's Jesus is simply masquerading as man.[73] He is not God so thinly disguised that the divine union remains immediately transparent and open to perception; rather the unity is especially revealed in the dynamic of history, particularly in his fully human dependence upon, and radical *obedience* to, the Father. He reveals the Father in what he does precisely because 'the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son does also. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does' (5:19–20). Similarly Jesus can claim he does not speak of himself (12:49; 14:10 — *i.e.* 'of my own accord' or 'on my own authority'), but only what the Father has given him to say (12:49). And Jesus' words are *God's*, and they are Spirit and life (6:63), because the Father gives the Spirit without measure to the Son he loves (3:34f.). The sheer depth and radical nature of Jesus' obedience is reflected in his insistence in 4:34, 'My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work'. One scholar has thus aptly summarised the twofold emphasis of John's Christology in the assertion:

> Jesus stands *with God* and expounds divine transcendence to finite men; he stands *with men* [italics mine] and demonstrates in his own life the proper relationship between men and God.[74]

All this is the framework within which we are to understand what prayer means to Jesus. Within it prayer cannot be depersonalised into a spiritual technique of self-enhancement of any kind; nor can we imagine Jesus offering recipes prescribing how to make prayer 'work' (*e.g.* that we should *praise* more; or that we should pray visualising our reception of the object we wish to receive, or whatever). Prayer for Jesus is an intimate and joyful sharing with the Father, part of living in unity of love with him. At the same time it is the prayer of a son — the archetypal son — acknowledging the Father's right

to filial obedience, and so Jesus expects to hear his direction and to know from him what to speak and what to do. It is from within such confidence of knowing the Father's *will* that Jesus can stand before the tomb of Lazarus, and, after giving thanks that his prayer has been heard, command the man four-days-dead to come forth! And it is from within this lived unity with the Father, and out of love and filial obedience to him, that Jesus, deeply troubled at the fate that looms before him, nevertheless prays not 'Save me from this hour', but 'Father, glorify your name' (12:28). In all of this, John sharpens the lines already present, but more faintly, in the Synoptics. He also offers us, in addition to their description, a final and testamentary prayer in John 17 which encapsulates Jesus' stance in prayer as John understands it.

B. Jesus' testamentary prayer — John 17

The prayer has been called Jesus' High Priestly Prayer (since David Chyträus, 1531–1600), but there is little specifically sacrificial in it outside 17:19, and even there the cultic overtones are not pronounced. It is better seen as a revelatory discourse (the disciples are intended to hear it and learn from it; it is not merely petition) belonging to the more general type of testamentary prayer for which there are precedents in Gen.49; Deut.32–3; Jud.22:7–23; etc.[75]

The first five verses of the testamentary prayer have all too often been given the heading 'Jesus Prays for Himself' in contrast with later sections praying for the disciples and for the church. But though the prayer relates to himself, it cannot be said to be 'for' himself; at least not in the way we pray for ourselves, taking in turn our health, our families, our holidays, and so forth. The single petition Jesus offers, in the recognition that his hour has at last come, is 'Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you!' The verb 'glorify' can mean 'praise, honour, magnify' or 'clothe in splendour': when the Son asks the Father to glorify him, the latter is meant. And in the immediate context of 17:5, 'glorification' entails a reversal of his self-emptying in his incarnation. As the (implicit) language of descent and reascent usually applies to the Son of Man in John, we should probably think of the glorification in terms of the scene in Dan. 7. But in the wider context of John the denotation of the verb 'glorify' must include the cross: cf. 12:23–4, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains only a simple seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds'.[76] The hideous execution at Golgotha has become part of Jesus' clothing with splendour, *only* and *precisely* because in it Jesus' archetypal obedience — and through it also the love of God for the world — is revealed. The petition that the Father glorify the Son is given the ultimate purpose that the Son might glorify the Father. The point here is that Jesus' crucifixion and exaltation clothe God with splendour in the sense that through these things men will see God's splendour. The death and exaltation are a foretaste of the glory of God that will fill the world at the End (cf. Hab. 2:14), when God answers the prayer 'Let your name be sanctified' with a complete revelation of himself.

The ground for the petition is given in 17:2: God is asked to glorify the Son 'since', 'for' or 'as' he has already given him authority over all flesh (a semiticism for 'humanity'). This should probably be taken to mean that Jesus

petitions the Father to 'glorify him' on the ground that God has already determined pretemporally to give Jesus just such saving, revelatory authority in and through this 'exaltation'.[77] In short, Jesus asks God to fulfil his eternal promise in and through the cross, which Jesus already knows is foreordained for him. This is indeed a breath-taking prayer which, while entirely acknowledging the Father's sovereignty, yet reveals that such ultimacy is no fatalism, or rigid determinism. Jesus must willingly give himself over to, and pray for, the very immolation and vindication predestined for him.[78]

Verse 3 is usually taken as a parenthesis rather than a development of the logic begun in vv.1–2. The 'life' God pretemporally willed that the Son should have authority to bestow is not something apart from God. Rather, it is the revelation of the Father in the Son whom he sends as his representative. So the Father is petitioned to glorify the Son so that the resultant revelation might become truly life-giving. The resultant prayer, taken with vv.4–5, amounts to a petition that the cross and exaltation glorify the Father in the Son who is one with him, and it is the very antithesis of any self-centred prayer. It is better given the heading 'Jesus petitions for his glorification' (so Schnackenburg), than the more common 'Jesus prays for himself'.

In 17:6–19, we have what may be called 'Jesus' Prayer for the Disciples'. The substance of the actual petition appears first only at 17:11: 'Protect them by the power of your name — the name you gave me — so that they may be one as we are one'. Verses 6,10 provide essentially three grounds for this central request. *First* the disciples have come genuinely to believe in Jesus as the revelation of the Father (see esp. v.8). *Secondly*, they have come to believe this because the Father has given them to Jesus (vv.6b, 9b, 10): they are not of the world and Jesus does not pray for the world (v.9a), but for the disciples because they belong to the Father. If they belong to him, he will surely keep them, and it is this the prayer requests. *Thirdly* Jesus has truly manifested God's character (his 'name': so v.6), thereby bringing the disciples to belief, and while he was with them he kept them by the power of his revelation of the name (*i.e.* the character) of God; so v.12. But now he is departing this world. He will no longer be able to protect them himself by his teaching and by acts that reveal the Father's name. So the Father himself is petitioned anew to keep his own, in the power of the revelation of his character and purpose. Clearly, as we have suggested before, 'predestination' in John does not reduce human beings to the status of puppets: it is not the rigid fatalism it is sometimes perverted into — men and women for their part remain responsible to believe and to obey — nor does it eliminate the need for prayer: Jesus *petitions* the Father to protect those that are his. It may leave men and women with no grounds for arrogance (they have to acknowledge their belief as grace), but it leaves them with no grounds for complacency either. It ought to prompt only adoration and trusting and total obedience.[79]

The main petition (v.11b) is that God keep them by the power of his self-revelation, and so enable them to live in a unity that reflects the oneness of love between the Father and the Son. The significance is spelled out in what follows. The disciples need protection *first* because the world hates them for receiving Jesus' word (v.14). They need protection *second* because the world is not merely the human realm, but it is the realm under the evil one; so while the disciple is not to be taken out of the world, he or she has to be protected from the evil one whom John elsewhere calls 'the ruler of this world' (cf.

12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Here we meet the strongest dualistic presentation of the world — one which Schnackenburg and Brown rightly point out is enormously different from many modern Christian approaches wielding the banner 'identification with the world', 'penetration into the world', etc. Here the world is an entity for which Jesus says he does not pray (v.9); those God has eternally given to Jesus must be saved 'from the world' through witnesses of Jesus and his disciples. Otherwise the world is simply an entity that bears hostility, and which must be convicted of its sin, its false righteousness and its judgment (16:9–11). There is to be no withdrawal from the world (v.15), but equally no assimilation into it; rather, protection from it (v.15b), and from the power that rules it, is what Jesus prays for. Only as the disciples are kept safe from 'the world' (understood as the system under the power of the 'ruler of this world'), and from the one who rules it, shall they be able to live in the unity which echoes the Son's relationship to the Father (so 17:11c).

That perhaps needs pondering: have we become so spiritually superficial that we no longer recognise the different dimensions of the activity of the powers that seek to entice us, and the dangers they pose to our lives before God? Subtly, and in myriad ways, the ruler of this world attempts to keep us in, or move us into, conformity to 'the world' he has woven. We recognise it at a distance, but not so easily in ourselves. We are the first to spot the white South African brother trapped in racism, or to be horrified by yesterday's Christian captain composing hymns on the deck of a slaver; but we do not so readily perceive where *we* are in danger of becoming entangled! The injunction of Jesus, 'Pray that you will not fall into temptation!' (Lk. 22:40,46) is not just advice for the hour of crisis. In the meantime we must take courage from Jesus' prayer for us; he prays for his church as he prays for men and women upon whom he has set his love.

Linguistically v.17 offers a new petition: 'Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth'. But materially this is simply a restatement in different terms of the petition that God might keep the disciples in or by his name. The latter, it will be remembered, was a circumlocution for God himself, and so came to denote God's nature, character and purpose as they are revealed to men and women. This too is what John means by 'the truth'. The term 'sanctify' in the NT does not primarily have the sense 'improve morally or religiously', but its OT sense 'consecrate to God's purpose'. To sanctify an object, animal or human being was to take it out of common use to be devoted to God's use: for John this is the same as saying, 'Set the disciples apart from the world and protect them from it!' The disciples are to be kept by the name or sanctified by the truth in order that they may fulfil the same mission to the world Jesus was sent to fulfil (v.18); *i.e.* to bear witness to it.

The term 'sanctify' is a cultic metaphor, and Jesus now uses it of himself in a rare reflexive form not paralleled in John (17:19). The presupposition of the disciples' full consecration is the death and exaltation of Jesus. Only with that, and with the gift of the Paraclete to which it leads, can the disciples be kept in the name by which they were saved, sanctified in the truth which they came to believe. The language here then is indeed priestly, though here as in Hebrews Jesus is not merely the priest who sanctifies the offering, but himself the offering that is consecrated. This is one of the several indications in the Gospel that John fully accepts the traditional Christian view that Jesus' death is an atoning sacrifice. It is usually said, *per contra*, that John sees the cross

only as a revelation of the love of God — and that this saves — not as a vicarious and expiatory sacrifice for sin.[80]

Finally, in 17:20–26, Jesus prays for the future church. Once again it is possible to miss the wood for the trees. There are three requests here: *first* that the future church of believers may all be one, even as the Father and the Son are one (v.21a). This repeats as a petition what in v.11 was stated as the purpose of Jesus' prayer that the Father keep the believers safe. *Second* Jesus prays that the disciples will be sustained in such a way that they can be said to be 'in' the Father and the Son (v.21b). The stated purpose of this request is that 'the world' may see (through the church) that God has sent (and revealed himself in) the Son. A *third* and less directly stated petition is that the disciples may be able (eventually) to be where Jesus is and to behold his pre-temporal and post-resurrectional glory (v.24). This is a prayer that at the Parousia the disciples may be taken into the heavens to behold and to be with the heavenly Lord, and therein to be satiated.

The main theme of the whole prayer is the glorification of Jesus and the resultant unity of the church.[81] Jesus petitions God that he protect his people so that they may be *one*. This unity is to consist not in some special sense of *camaraderie*, nor in a superficial ecumenical patching over of differences (far less, *contra* Pollard, in a boasting in our ecclesiastical diversity!), but in a belongingness and mutual love that spring from unity with Jesus (and through that, because the Father is in Jesus, with the Father too). The background is God's intended End-time reconciliation of all alienated beings. Sin has pulled the world away from a knowledge of God, who is the source of love and light, and so correspondingly plunged mankind into the darkness of mutual alienation, strife and envy. God's ultimate purpose, as the author of Ephesians was to put it, was cosmic peace and the reconciliation of all things (in love) in and under Christ (Eph. 1:10,23). In the meantime (according to Jesus' prayer) the church is supposed to experience the beginning of that future state of affairs and so to reflect what the End will be like to the world. Unity is potentially a powerful witness to the very nature of God's redemptive act.[82] Hence the urgency in the call of Ephesians, '*Make every effort* to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace'. The question is whether we will heed Paul's exhortation; whether we will allow the teaching embedded in Jesus' prayer to mould our lives, or pursue instead the usual *potpourri* of our own minor ambitions and church empire-building.

The real challenge of Jesus' prayer, however, is not merely to a new attitude towards church unity, as though our striving will attain that goal. Nor yet is it to be watered down into a call for Church Unity Sundays and corresponding prayers. Far less is it a challenge to a new method, or technique of praying. The real challenge of the prayer is to nothing less than a Copernican revolution in our praying. Our prayers are too often centred on ourselves and spread out in concentric circles of our (often legitimate) interests, responsibilities, loves and imagined needs. Jesus' prayer puts the *Father's* glory at the centre, and spreads out in concentric circles of *his* will and purpose. Only as we, by God's grace, become more deeply rooted in the Father's love, and more keen to know the One to whom we are reconciled through the cross, will that revolution become more possible, and the unity of which Jesus spoke (and for which he prayed) become a visible reality.

C. Jesus' teaching on prayer in the fourth gospel

Considerations of space do not allow anything but the briefest treatment here. Indeed what is most significant on the issue has perhaps already been said above: the mission of the disciples is to echo Jesus' unity with the Father, and this means to have *Jesus'* priorities in prayer (17:11,18).

At first sight, the teaching Jesus offers the disciples on prayer seems almost embarrassingly open-ended:

> I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it (14:12–14; cf. 15:7,16; 16:24).

Did the Johannine community really see *greater* works than Jesus' raising of Lazarus, his turning of water to wine, and his walking upon the sea? And was anything and everything they asked for granted? But to answer these questions, we need to listen more carefully to the Johannine context of Jesus' words.

With respect to the question of 'greater' works, this is not a matter of more prodigious ones, but takes us to the heart of John's understanding of what Jesus' 'works' mean. The OT uses the word 'works' of God's acts in creation (cf. Gen. 2:2) and in salvation-history (Exod. 34:10; Ps. 66:5; 77:12, etc.), and John uses the vocabulary especially to point to the unity between the Father's activity and that of the Son (cf. 5:17 'My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working', and compare 14:10: '. . . it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work [here = teaching]'). In John, Jesus' 'works' are activities the Father has given him to accomplish (5:36) and which reveal the redemptive act of God in Christ.[83] But during the period of the ministry, the works Jesus performs cannot yet fully reveal him — understanding of them (even such as at 2:11, etc.). remains partial; only the 'glorification' of Jesus in the cross and resurrection (and in the consequent gift of the Paraclete) can bring authentic faith and true understanding of the significance of Jesus' works. The 'works' thus cannot yet during the ministry fully accomplish their true end. By contrast the words the Father and the Son will give the disciples to do through the Spirit, *after* Jesus' glorification, will be set in the context of Jesus' cross and exaltation and so will more fully and truly reveal the Son. *It is in this salvation-historically defined sense that the words will be greater* than Jesus' own.

As for the apparent open-endedness of Jesus' promise, it must be remembered that the promise too is contextually defined. The 'anything you ask' probably relates primarily to the 'works' (understood in their Johannine sense) Jesus has just spoken of. If so, the content of what may be asked for is limited to 'works' that will reveal the unity of the Father and the Son in new creation (which might include anything from healing, to giving grace to bear suffering for Jesus; or from providing the disciples' material needs to granting their prayers for powerful witness, or wisdom in the church). That the asking envisaged is contextually restricted to asking for things that glorify the Father and the Son is further emphasised by the qualification that such requests

should be made *in Jesus' name*. This clearly does not denote the casual closing of a prayer with the *utterance* of Jesus' name. To do something 'in the name of' another is to do it as that person's representative, or to do it in a way that is consonant with the character, wishes or revealed goals of the person whose name is appealed to (thus does Jesus both 'come in my Father's name' [5:43] and work miracles 'in my Father's name' [10:25]). To ask something in Jesus' name is to ask as one who is bound up with *his* purposes, and for something that reveals, and so glorifies, *him*.

A combination of the two perspectives above goes part of the way towards explaining another aspect of Jesus' teaching on prayer in the Fourth Gospel, namely that the disciples have 'not yet' asked for anything in Jesus' name (16:24). Only the arrival of the decisive hour of Jesus' 'glorification' yields the possibility of the advent of the Spirit as Paraclete (16:7; 14:16), and the consequent dwelling of the Father and the Son with the disciple (14:20,21,23, 26, etc.) which is the condition of acting and asking 'in my name'.

The insistence that prayer offered 'in Jesus' name' will be answered is further elucidated (and guarded) in 15:1–16. The condition is now clarified that prayer will be answered 'If you abide in me, and my words abide in you' (15:7). This condition is necessary, because only prayers asked within its fulfilment would be to the Father's glory — and this is the purpose of God's answering prayer (15:8) — and only petitions made and granted within the intimacy of this union will demonstrate that the askers are Jesus' true disciples (15:8b), men and women who bear enduring fruit.

One last picture may put what is being said in helpful perspective: it is the picture embodied in 15:13–17. Here Jesus once again affirms that whatever the disciples ask in his name, the Father will grant (15:16) — so that their joy may be fulfilled (16:24). But as before the context sets a condition: the prayers will be answered because the disciples are Jesus' *friends*; indeed *friends* for whom he lays down his life in love (15:13). Furthermore, the disciples are friends *if* they do what Jesus commands. To our ears such 'friendship' sounds preposterous, for we are used primarily to thinking of mutual friendships amongst equals. But not all friendships are such (*e.g.* that between fathers and sons), and Jesus' imagery derives rather from courtly circles.[84] The king has many servants, but those who serve him with love and loyalty he may come to call his 'friends'. These are marked out from the rest who remain mere 'servants' (and note the contrast in vv.14–15) not by a freedom to disobey, but by the fact that the monarch shares with them his innermost counsels and trusts them. He does this *because* they love him and obey him. And it is these people whose petitions are liable to be answered; for they ask out of a knowledge of the king's counsel, and out of a will to serve his interests. Such is the friendship Jesus offers the disciples: if they loyally obey him, he does not treat them as servants (who merely blindly follow orders), but as privileged 'friends' to whom he has revealed what he has learned from the Father, and to whom he will (by implication) continue to reveal the divine will through the Paraclete (cf. 16:13–15). Within that trusted relationship of intimate union and revelation their asking is likely to be appropriate, and so their petitions granted.

The challenge to the reader remains. Will we seek, through loyal obedience and love, to deepen our unity with the Father and the Son, and so become

'friends' of God? As we do we will learn to allow our asking to be shaped by God's will and purposes, and so we shall see God glorified in the answers. That will be joy indeed (14:24), though it will be eclipsed by the greater joy of knowing the Father and the Son.

5

Prayer in Paul's Writings

DAVID G. PETERSON

Nowhere in the writings of Paul do we find a systematic exposition of the theme of prayer, though the subject is often mentioned. There are numerous exhortations to pray and there are numerous references to the prayers of Paul himself. None of these passages contains what would commonly be called a prayer — a direct address to God — and yet 'his gratitude, his greetings, his farewells, his hopes, his admonitions, his worries, his travel plans are all often cast in a language which borders on prayer, a language shaped and informed by his awareness of divine presence, divine activity'.[1] Prayer is at the heart of Paul's thinking and practice. Indeed it is fascinating to observe how readily he turns from exposition or exhortation to a form of prayer and back again. The apostle demonstrates that prayer and theology belong together: God-honouring prayer will be informed and motivated by a true knowledge of God and his ways.

I. PRAYER MATERIAL IN ROMANS

Since references to prayer in the writings of Paul are diverse and extensive, for the sake of simplicity and convenience the material in Romans will be tabulated here and will become the focus of this study. Where appropriate, material from other epistles will be incorporated. Although it is acknowledged that the apostle generally uses the language of prayer to refer to some form of *petition,* the importance of doxology, blessing, praise and thanksgiving in his own life and teaching is also clear. It is therefore appropriate to include in such a study as this a range of responses to God in addition to what may be strictly termed prayer. In broad outline Romans contains:

a. **Opening and closing blessings** (1:7; 16:20)
b. **A report of Paul's thanksgiving** for the Roman Christians (1:8)
c. **A report of Paul's regular petition**, asking God to allow him to visit Rome (1:9–10)
d. **Doxologies** (1:25; 9:5; 11:33–6; 16:27) and expressions of **thanksgiving** (6:17–18; 7:25) at significant points in the argument
e. **Specific teaching about prayer and the Holy Spirit** (8:15–16, 26–7)
f. **Exhortations to prayer** (12:12,14 [general]; 15:30–2 [specific])
g. **Wish-prayers:** indirect prayers, formally addressed to the readers, telling them what the apostle desires God to do for them (15:5–6,13,33).

This material will be examined under three main headings: the prayers of Paul, Paul's teaching about prayer and the Spirit, and Paul's exhortations to prayer.

II. THE PRAYERS OF PAUL

Some indication of the way the apostle himself prayed is given by the indirect wish-prayers scattered throughout his letters, by the reports he gives of his own practice of regular thanksgiving and intercession and by the various forms of blessing and praise that appear in his writings. Paul's prayers function as models for Christians in every age and culture.

A. Intercessory Wish-prayers

Modern readers may not recognise the stylised greeting which climaxes the introduction to most of Paul's letters as a form of prayer. However, with words such as 'grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ' (Rom. 1:7), the apostle followed the convention of first-century letter writers by expressing an introductory prayer for his readers in the form of a wish.[2] In his choice of terminology he may have been influenced by Christian liturgical practice, but there are good reasons for concluding that these opening salutations were his own individual formulation.[3] Despite the fact that the formula varies little from epistle to epistle, it is not a mere formality. It expresses Paul's prayerful concern for his readers to experience the grace of God appropriate to their circumstances and the peace that is the fruit and realisation of grace.

The closing benedictions of Paul's letters vary from short forms such as 'The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you' (1 Cor. 16:24, cf. Rom. 16:20) and 'The God of peace be with you' (Rom. 15:33) to longer forms such as 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all' (2 Cor. 13:14, cf. Eph. 6:23–4). The greater freedom evidenced in the variation of these benedictions suggests a purposeful adapting of a formula, suitable to the letter and congregation in question.[4] These benedictions mention God in the third person but are addressed to the readers and may therefore be classified as a form of wish-prayer, expressing Paul's genuine desire that God would bless his readers in the way specified. Many of the closing benedictions of the NT letters have found their way into Christian liturgical use.

A more obvious form of wish-prayer is found in Rom. 15:5–6,13; 1 Thess. 3:11–13; 5:23–4 (cf. 2 Thess. 2:16–17; 3:5, 16; 2 Tim. 1:16, 18). These are the closest approximations to direct praying in the letters of Paul (apart from the cry *Marana tha*, 'Come O Lord!',[5] 1 Cor. 16:22). When changed back from the epistolary style they indicate something of the content and style of the prayers used by Paul in his own devotional practices. There is a basic structure to what may be called the principal wish-prayers:[6]

(i) They begin with God as the subject (described with various attributes appropriate to the 'petition' that follows);
(ii) They continue with a wish for those addressed, suggesting that the apostle is genuinely interceding for the readers in some important matter;

(iii) They sometimes conclude with a further clause or phrase focusing on some additional benefit.

Thus, for instance,

(i) May the God of steadfastness and encouragement
(ii) grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus,
(iii) that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 15:5–6).

In direct speech this would read: 'O God of steadfastness and encouragement, grant that the Christians in Rome might live in such harmony with one another in accord with Christ Jesus, that together they may with one voice glorify you, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ'.

A number of comments can be made about this prayer. First, it appears that Paul's practice was generally to direct his petitions to God the Father but he habitually associated the name of the Lord Jesus Christ with any address to God (*e.g.* Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; and especially 1 Thess. 3:11–13). Indeed, the wish-prayer in 2 Thess. 2:16–17 is addressed first to 'our Lord Jesus Christ himself'.[7] Calling upon Jesus as Lord for salvation must have involved calling upon him in prayer (cf. Rom. 10:9–13; 1 Cor. 1:2; 12:3) and it is argued below that Paul prayed to Christ for deliverance from his 'thorn in the flesh' in 2 Cor. 12:8. However it must be acknowledged that the focus of Paul's prayers is usually God as Father. Although the title 'our Father' is found in some traditional Jewish prayers[8] and Jesus clearly invited his disciples to share in his own address to God as Father in the Lord's Prayer, it seems that Paul's encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus was at the centre of his discovery of God as Father, 'and therefore of the filial prayer of the apostle'.[9] The importance of this calling upon God as Father will be further discussed below in connection with Rom. 8:15–17. Paul speaks elsewhere of prayer 'in the name of the Lord Jesus' (*e.g.* Col. 3:17; Eph. 5:20) and prays himself 'through Jesus Christ' (*e.g.* Rom. 1:8; 16:27, cf. 2 Cor. 1:20) to express the reality of this new relationship with God through Jesus (cf. Eph. 2:18). Paul does not speak of Christ acting as high priest in presenting or transmitting each prayer to the Father, since this runs counter to the notion that each Christian has direct access to God (Rom. 5:2; cf. John 16:26). Prayer to God through Christ implies that the Father may be approached with confidence *only on the basis of Christ's saving work* and because the person praying has a personal trust in Jesus as Saviour.

Secondly, the address to 'the God of steadfastness and encouragement' (Rom. 15:5) picks up two words from the preceding verse and indicates that God is the ultimate source of these virtues. Such gifts are necessary if Christians are to live in harmony with one another and to glorify God together with one voice. This description of God is therefore carefully worded because of its relevance to the petition being made: it is as the giver of steadfastness and encouragement that he can meet the needs of his people. Paul appears to have been following an ancient Jewish prayer style with the use of such descriptive epithets (cf. Rom. 15:13, 'the God of hope'; 15:33, 'the God of peace'; 2 Cor. 13:11, 'the God of love and peace').[10]

Thirdly, the prayer-wishes occur at significant points in Paul's letters,

serving a summarising or terminating function in the internal structure of the letters. They indicate to the readers his prayer to God for them at key points in the argument. Thus the prayer in Rom. 15:5–6 concludes the teaching of 14:1 — 15:4 about relationships between 'the weak' and 'the strong' with a petition that the Roman Christians may live in harmony, united by their relationship to Christ. The second petition introduces the notion of glorifying God 'with one voice' that becomes the focus of 15:7–12. Only as they praise God together for a common salvation in Christ will they be able to rise above their petty arguments and divisions.

In some contexts Paul prays specifically as one preparing his converts for presentation to Christ at his return. This intercessory role is clearly an expression of his relationship with them as evangelist and pastor. However, the Thessalonians are given 'a reciprocal priestly ministry of intercessory supplications' as they respond to Paul's invitation to pray for him (1 Thess. 5:25; 2 Thess. 3:1–2).[11] Thus in 1 Thess. 3:11–13 he writes,

> Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, clear the way for us to come to you. May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones. (Cf. 1 Thess. 5:23–5).

In this prayer-wish Paul repeats and extends the concern expressed in his reported intercessions for them (v.10, 'Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith'). Only God can overcome the obstacles Paul is experiencing (2:18) and make it possible for him to minister to them in person again (v.11). Only God can work within them the changes that are necessary, enabling them to increase and abound in love (v.12). Despite the fact that the Thessalonians are commended for their love (1:3, 3:6, 4:9–10), Paul knows enough about the pressures they are undergoing to perceive the potential for division and selfishness in their midst. Hence the petition for their love to be strengthened and extended, even as he has been enabled by God to love them. The structure of the prayer in Greek indicates that this increase in love is to be the means by which they are to be prepared 'blameless and holy' before God at the return of Christ (v.13). Clearly the Christian hope ought to give a particular focus and urgency to all prayer because of the note of accountability that it sounds. Nothing is more important for an individual or a congregation than a readiness to meet the Lord!

Although such prayers serve an *epistolary* function, forming a bridge from one section of a letter to another, they also have a *teaching* function, showing the readers how to pray for themselves in the situation, and inviting them to share in the apostle's own prayers. In spite of their compact, formal character, the longer wish-prayers 'give living expression to the apostle's deeply responsible love — to his vital anxieties and burning hopes for each particular church'.[12] They are therefore, in the final analysis, an essential part of Paul's *pastoral* ministry to the churches.

B. Reports of Thanksgiving and Intercession

In Rom. 1:8–10 Paul writes: 'First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for

all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to at last succeed in coming to you'. Here we have a thanksgiving report (v.8) and a petitionary prayer report (vv.9–10). Such reports are found in varying patterns in most of Paul's letters in paragraphs that are sometimes called the 'thanksgiving period'. A similar pattern is found in Phil. 1:3–11 and Phm. 4–6, but in Col. 1:3–14 the pattern is thanksgiving — intercession — thanksgiving. In 1 Cor. 1:4–9 thanksgiving alone is mentioned. In Galatians Paul mentions neither thanksgiving nor petition for his readers.

Formally the apostle followed the convention of contemporary Greek letter writers by indicating to his readers his prayers on their behalf. However in character and contents Paul's prayer reports are far from being conventional. For one thing, 'the *structure* of the Pauline thanksgiving periods was Hellenistic while the *contents* (apart from their specifically Christian elements) showed the influence of Jewish thought'.[13] Furthermore, even in *structure* these thanksgiving periods were more highly developed and sophisticated than Greek epistolary conventions of the time.

Thanksgiving played such an important role in the NT that one writer has described it as virtually 'a synonym for the Christian life'.[14] Paul himself often gave thanks in broad terms for the gift of salvation (*e.g.* Col. 1:12; 2 Thess. 2:13, cf. Rom. 6:17; 2 Cor. 2:14, 9:15) but also specifically for the way the gospel was being received (1 Thess. 2:13), and thus for the faith of the Christian communities (Rom. 1:8; Eph. 1:15) and every practical expression of faith, hope and love (1 Thess. 1:2–3; Phil. 1:3–5, cf. Eph. 1:15–16; Col. 1:3–4). The close connection between thanksgiving and intercession in Paul's prayer reports is best understood in the context of his eschatological teaching. Although he is constantly thankful for past blessings and every sign of God's power presently at work in the lives of his converts, 'he will permit no satisfaction with them, but constantly in every letter exhorts and urges the churches to move forward in their Christian life'.[15] As he gives thanks for the churches, he apparently becomes more and more aware of their need for maturity or perseverance in faith, hope and love, especially as his thoughts turn to their ultimate encounter with God on the day of Christ's return. He often prays that his friends might be equipped in every way to lead godly and faithful lives as they wait for the consummation of God's purposes (*e.g.* 2 Thess. 1:11–12; Phil. 1:9–11; Col. 1:9–14).

An important source of words and motifs in Paul's prayers was the early Christian preaching. Words such as 'gospel', 'the word of God', 'grace' and 'faith' appear again and again. In one way or another, Paul's thanksgivings to God for his working in the lives of those addressed are 'causally linked to the gospel or its right reception'.[16] Terms applied to the gospel in the thanksgiving are sometimes then employed with a slight change of meaning to believers in the associated intercession. Thus, in Col. 1:6 Paul gives thanks that the gospel is 'producing fruit and growing' in the whole world and also amongst the readers, and then in 1:10 he prays that the Colossians might be 'bearing fruit in every good work'. Inspired by the way he sees the gospel at work, he prays for 'a similar dynamic activity in the lives of the believers themselves (cf. Phil. 1:6)'.[17]

In Rom. 1:8 Paul gives thanks for a group of Christians largely unknown to him. Although the greetings in chapter 16 indicate some acquaintance with believers in Rome, that city lay outside the sphere of his previous apostolic activity (1:13; 15:22–4). The focus of Paul's thanksgiving is the fact that the faith of the Roman believers is being proclaimed 'in all the world'. It is not the particular quality of their faith that is in view but 'the fact that also in the imperial capital there is a church of Jesus Christ'.[18] Such thanksgiving is important because it acknowledges that *faith is the gift of God.*

Paul's oath in v.9 calls God to witness, since the matters of which he speaks concern his own inward life. God alone knows the sincerity of the claim that he prays regularly for them, asking somehow to be able to visit them. The expression 'whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son' indicates that Paul's praying for the Romans is 'an integral part of his service of God and therefore something about which it is specially fitting for him to appeal to God to bear witness'.[19] There is an intimate connection between prayer and mission in the life and ministry of Paul. His own prayers and those of his friends are regarded as an important instrument for carrying out his apostolic ministry (cf. also Rom. 15:30–2; 1 Thess. 3:10–11; 2 Thess. 3:1–2). One writer has aptly described Paul's prayers as 'the crucible in which his missionary projects come to birth'.[20]

When Paul tells the Romans 'how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times' he is not simply following a current literary convention. The list of references to constantly practised and urgent prayer by the apostle and others is striking (*e.g.* 1 Cor. 1:4; Phil. 1:3–4; 4:6; 1 Thess. 1:2; 3:10; 5:17; Rom. 12:12). The very structure of Paul's letters, with 'prayers' interspersed throughout, suggests to some that he believed his readers' whole life 'should be lived as if prayerfully "before God", but can be punctuated by frequent acts of consciously turning back to him'.[21] Others prefer to see these references to unceasing prayer as pointing simply to prayer at frequent and regular intervals.[22] In Rom. 1:9–10 set times of prayer are most likely in view with the expression 'how constantly I remember you (lit. "always in my prayers")'.

Unlike other letters in which Paul mentions his intercessions for the recipients, he does not spell out the *content* of his regular prayers for the Romans. The focus in 1:10 is on what he prays for himself ('I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you'). Of course, the answering of this prayer would enable Paul to minister to the Roman Christians and so bring them blessing (1:11), but his immediate concern is for God to open up for him a pathway to Rome. The language in v.10 suggests 'the special degree of submissiveness to the divine will which characterised the prayer.'[23] Paul knew himself to be called 'by the will of God' to be an apostle (*e.g.* 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Col. 1:1) and that his commission to preach to the Gentiles should logically take him in due course to Rome (Rom. 1:13–15). However, in expressing to the Father his godly desire to minister in Rome he acknowledges *his complete dependence on the will of God* for its fulfilment. Again in Rom. 15:30–2, when Paul encourages his readers to join in earnest prayers for him, he adds the important proviso 'that by God's will I may come to you'. This does not introduce a note of uncertainty or doubt into prayer but is an acknowledgement that all things are in the hand of God. The apostle has devised plans that give him a strategy for accomplishing his God-

given ministry (cf. 1:11–15; 15:22–9) and he submits himself and his plans to the sovereign will of God through prayer. Thus prayer can express simultaneously *a specific appeal for God's help and a willingness to let God be God in answering the request!* Even when he is hindered from accomplishing his plans (1:13), he is encouraged to persevere in prayer for the fulfilment of an objective he believes to be entirely consistent with the revealed will of God.

Although intercessory prayer-reports are commonly found in the thanksgiving periods at the beginning of Paul's letters, they are also found at significant points within the body of the letters (*e.g.* 2 Cor. 13:7,9; Col. 1:29 – 2:3; Eph. 3:14–19). The most elaborate of these is found in Eph. 3:14–19, with an impressive doxology concluding the section (vv.20–1). This passage forms a climax in Ephesians, which has been described by one commentator as being itself 'above all a prayer directed to God — but a prayer prayed publicly'.[24] The intercessory prayer report of 1:15–19, which is resumed momentarily in 3:1, but broken off to make way for an account of Paul's ministry (3:2–13), is picked up and concluded in 3:14–19 (there are obvious verbal links between 1:15–19 and 3:14–19). The ground of Paul's petition to the fatherly majesty of God (vv.14–15) is the great plan of salvation, first outlined in 1:3–14 and then developed in 2:1–22, a plan in which the apostle has a key role (3:1–13). There is some uncertainty about the structure of the Greek in 3:16–19, as Paul indicates how he intercedes.[25] It may be described as a prayer for the strengthening of the Spirit, the indwelling of Christ and the manifestation of God's glory or 'fulness' in his people. With this trinitarian focus there is a compelling concern for the faith, comprehension and growth in love of his Gentile converts, in company with 'all the saints'. Paul's prayer clearly develops on the basis of his exposition of God's purpose to build a new humanity in Christ.

C. Petition for Personal Needs

It is natural for prayer to focus on one's own concerns. However, 2 Cor. 12:7–10 is the only place where Paul gives direct insight into the way he prayed concerning his personal needs. Even here, as the context of the letter shows, this special prayer experience was intimately connected with his mission. Whatever the nature of the 'thorn in the flesh' — and the exact meaning of the expression remains elusive — it appeared to be such a handicap to his life and ministry that he pleaded with God for its removal. It is most likely that the Lord to whom he prayed was Christ, since v.9 goes on to equate the answer ('*my* power is made perfect in weakness'), with Paul's experience of 'the power of *Christ*'.[26]

Some commentators have suggested that 'three times' may be a stereotyped expression for urgency in praying, but it is more reasonable to suppose that Paul prayed on three significant occasions for the removal of the problem and that this was part of the process of accepting his affliction and learning to live with it. The answer to his prayer was not what he sought: the affliction remained but the promise was given, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness'. The contentment with that answer expressed in vv.9–10 indicates a clear conviction that it was the Lord's gracious and wise provision for him in that situation ('I will boast all the more

gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me').[27] Paul's experience of bringing his need confidently before the Lord thus became a means of discerning God's will for his life and growing in Christ-likeness (cf. 13:4).

Such a direct communication from Christ cannot be expected as the normal response to prayers for healing or deliverance from some situation. However, this incident suggests that there is a time to cease petitioning God for something and to rest in the same grace and power of Christ promised especially to the apostle in his distress but available to all who seek such divine enabling (cf. Eph. 3:14–21).

D. Praise and Thanksgiving

The importance of thanksgiving in Paul's prayer-reports has already been stressed. There is a certain overlap in his writings between thanksgiving and the notion of giving glory to God (cf. Rom. 1:21; 2 Cor. 4:15; 9:11–13) and between blessing and thanksgiving (cf. 1 Cor. 14:16). However, careful study of the use of such terminology in certain contexts reveals different dimensions to Paul's thinking and practice.

Just as the apostle injects wish-prayers at significant points in the argument of his letters, so also he breaks suddenly into praise (*e.g.* to 'the Creator, who is forever praised. Amen', Rom. 1:25) or thanksgiving (*e.g.* 'But thanks be to God . . .', Rom. 6:17). This practice suggests that the life of prayer and thanksgiving should not be confined to set times and places, but that the acknowledgement of God's character and providence should be a natural part of everyday conversation for the Christians.

As part of his definition of the sin of mankind in Romans 1 Paul says: 'Although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him' (v.21). The verb translated 'glorified' (*edoxasan*) means to give God the glory (*doxa*) due to him. A 'doxology' is a formal expression of praise, glorifying God for who he is or what he has done. A simple doxology is found in Rom. 11:36 ('To him be the glory forever! Amen.' Cf. 16:27). More complex examples are found in Eph. 3:20–1 and 1 Tim. 1:17. These are not so much prayers as *acts of homage, combining confession and acclamation.* However, when Paul speaks of glorifying God in Rom. 1:21, he clearly has in view the total homage of a life of obedient service or worship.

Thanksgiving is one particular aspect of this glorification of God. Men and women, experiencing God's good providence in every area of life, 'ought to have recognised their indebtedness to his goodness and generosity, to have recognised him as the source of all the good things they enjoyed, and so to have been grateful to him for his benefits'.[28] Explicit thanksgiving for all the blessings of this life — not just a thankful attitude — is thus a duty of mankind. However, the problems of a broken relationship with God cannot simply be solved by expressions of gratitude for his goodness and generosity in creation. The wrath of God is 'revealed from heaven' because mankind has exchanged the truth about God for the lie of idolatry and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator himself (Rom. 1:18–25). The consequences of this rebellion against the Creator and his purposes are such that only faith in Jesus and his atoning death can deliver people from the wrath of God and enable them to exult or rejoice in God (Rom. 5:1–11).

Putting it another way, only those who respond to the mercies of God in Jesus Christ and present their bodies to him as a living sacrifice, expressing the obedience of faith, can honour God with acceptable worship (cf. 12:1).

Mention of the abandonment of the worship due to the Creator leads Paul in Jewish manner to express a brief benediction or blessing to 'the Creator, who is forever praised' (Rom. 1:25). A somewhat similar form of benediction is found at Rom. 9:5. In form and purpose a simple benediction and a doxology are clearly the same. To bless God in the OT is to declare his works so that he may be praised (cf. Gen. 24:48; Deut. 8:10; Pss. 103, 104). In Judaism, certain forms of prayer began with the formula 'Blessed be . . .' (Greek *eulogētos* for the Hebrew *baruk*, cf. Gen. 14:20; 1 Sam. 25:32; 2 Sam. 18:28).[29] All forms of prayer beginning with the praise of God are called *berakah* (the Hebrew for 'blessing'). In the NT we find examples of this in Luke 1:68–79; 2 Cor. 1:3–4, 11:31; Eph. 1:3–14; 1 Pet. 1:3–9.

The introductory *berakah* of 2 Cor. 1:3–4 is like the earliest and simplest form of declarative praise in the OT: a single sentence expressing a joyous response to a definite act of God just experienced.[30] The longer blessings of Ephesians 1 and 1 Peter 1 conform more to the later, more developed Jewish forms, praising God in exalted language for the blessings of salvation. The *berakah* of 2 Corinthians 1 replaces the introductory thanksgiving normally found at the beginning of Paul's letters. The apostle addresses 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' as 'the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort'. He blesses God for the comfort recently received in the midst of his afflictions (cf. 1:8–10) and for the fact that this enables him to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which he has been comforted by God. This introduction begins the task of re-establishing and strengthening the bonds between Paul and his readers with which the letter is concerned.

In Ephesians 1 the introductory *berakah* includes the writer and the readers within its sphere (vv.3–14). It begins with the words 'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ', and continues to v.14 in one long sentence in Greek, itemising the blessings received. Three times the expression 'to the praise of his glory' is mentioned as the finality behind the outpouring of God's saving grace (vv.6,12,14). Believers should praise God's glory because all that was ordained to the praise of his glory has been fulfilled in them. 'To bless God in these circumstances is to acknowledge the truth not only of what he is but also of what we have become . . . God is blessed for his blessing, and man's praise gives glory to God while manifesting the glory that is his'.[31] A thanksgiving report follows in vv.15–16, and an intercessory prayer report concludes the chapter in vv.17–23, asking that the blessings of vv.3–14 may be fully known and enjoyed by the recipients of the letter.

In Rom. 11:33–6 Paul concludes his discussion of the problem of Israel's unbelief with an exalted hymn of praise and a doxology. Twice he has mentioned his sorrowful petitions for his fellow Jews who continue to reject Christ (9:1–3; 10:1) and, in an extended argument based on certain key OT Scriptures, has contemplated the mystery of divine election. However, this does not lead the apostle to gloom or fatalism but to wondering praise, because 'for him election is a matter of the freedom and faithfulness of the merciful God'.[32] The hymn begins with two exclamations, the first of which

extols the wisdom of God ('O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!') and the second drawing attention to man's inability to plumb the depth of that wisdom ('How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!'). Two OT citations in vv.34–5 support these exclamations. Then follows an affirmation of God as Creator, Sustainer, Ruler and Goal of all things ('For from him and through him and to him are all things'), leading into the concluding doxology ('To him be the glory forever! Amen.'). Paul's intention is surely to encourage his readers to repeat the Amen of his doxology, thus affirming their confidence in the character and ways of God outlined in chapter 9–11. This whole section epitomises the practice of praise and adoration that accompanies Paul's exposition of the purposes of God at various points in his writings.

As a conclusion to this section it may be observed that although the Greek verbs *eulogeō* ('bless, praise') and *eucharisteō* ('give thanks') were used synonymously in some contexts in the first century A.D., Paul consistently uses the terminology of thanksgiving in the introductions of his letters with reference to *God's work in the lives of the addressees,* and the terminology of praise for *blessings in which he himself participated.*[33] Paul's thanksgiving reports indicate the importance of acknowledging God's work in the lives of others, both as a means of *glorifying God* and as *an encouragement to those concerned.* Although it may be true that Paul thanked his friends and supporters in one way or another (*e.g.* Phil. 4:14–18), his thanksgiving is generally addressed unambiguously to God. Even when the thanksgiving is phrased in such a way that the people for whom he is giving thanks are overhearing that thanks and are therefore being commended indirectly, the apostle's concern is to acknowledge God as the ultimate source of blessing. From a pastoral or practical point of view, his concern is to encourage people without stooping to cheap flattery, teaching them to acknowledge every indication of God's work in their lives. Thanksgiving is such a distinctive of Paul's life and teaching because it is the sign of *a personal apprehension and enjoyment of the merciful provisions of a personal God.* Paul's praise introductions, and the benedictions, doxologies and outbursts of praise throughout his letters are an invitation to others to join in *glorifying God for who he is and what he has done for them.*

III. PAUL'S TEACHING ABOUT PRAYER AND THE SPIRIT

Two of Paul's most profound statements about prayer are found in Romans 8, where a major concern is to outline the characteristics of life in the Spirit.

A. Prayer, the Spirit and Christian Assurance

In Rom. 8:15 Paul refers to the Holy Spirit as 'the Spirit of adoption'(RSV), 'the Spirit of sonship' (NIV), suggesting that it is the Spirit who brings about the uniting of men and women to Jesus Christ so that they share in his sonship to the Father. On the other hand, it should be noted that in Gal. 4:6 Paul says, '*Because you are sons,* God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba! Father!" ' Although this has suggested to some that adoption precedes the gift of the Spirit, and that 'the Spirit is a kind of

seal confirming the adoption',[34] Paul's main point here is that sons in their majority have the Spirit, whereas sons in their minority (contextually a reference to believers before the dawning of the new covenant) do not normally enjoy the Spirit. A further complication to this picture is the reference in Rom. 8:23 to our waiting for adoption as sons when our bodies are redeemed. The Spirit is the 'first-fruits', the foretaste or pledge of the full glory and inheritance that is to be ours at the resurrection (cf. 2 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 1:13–14), when the reality of our adoption is to be publicly manifested. We may conclude that the present work of the Spirit is to impart the *assurance of sonship* and to enable believers to express their new status as children of God, particularly in calling God 'Father'.

The RSV begins a new sentence midway through v.15 ('When we cry "Abba, Father!", the Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God'). This seems to limit the Spirit's witness to the activity of praying and suggests that the Spirit's testimony is dependent on our initiative. However, a more natural reading of the Greek is to punctuate with a comma after 'you received the Spirit of sonship' and to conclude the verse with the words 'by whom we cry "Abba, Father!" '(similarly, NIV). The next verse then stands on its own as a general affirmation of the Spirit's work in believers: 'The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children'.[35] Such a rendering of Rom. 8:15–16 makes it clear that it is the Holy Spirit who enables us to call God Father and so to express *the reality of our adoption as children of God.* Prayer to God as Father is thus intimately connected with the enjoyment of the blessings of the gospel, since it is a means by which the Spirit testifies to that adoption implicit in our justification by faith.

The fundamental work of the Holy Spirit is to enable us to believe in the redemptive love of God, as that love was demonstrated in the saving work of Jesus (Rom. 5:5–8). The Spirit enables believers to call God Father as an expression of the new status granted them in Christ. The role of believers is *to exercise the privilege and address God as Father,* thus affirming their confidence in the gospel and the love of God it proclaims. Paul's language (particularly in Gal. 4:6) suggests that true prayer is a divine act by the transcendent Spirit in us.[36] Indeed we may say that the Spirit enables us through prayer to participate in the life of the Trinity, sharing in a relationship 'in which the Son speaks his love for the Father'.[37] However, in view of Paul's many exhortations to prayer, it is clear that prayer is also a human responsibility, and an expression of the obedience of faith. The Spirit prays in us (Gal. 4:6) and we pray 'in' or 'by' the Spirit (Rom. 8:15).

There is no ground for limiting the words 'we cry' (*krazomen*) to tongues-speaking or some form of ecstatic congregational acclamation in response to the message of salvation.[38] In view of the wide-ranging application of this verb in the Greek version of the OT, it may be taken in Rom. 8:15 and Gal 4:6 to denote 'an urgent and sincere crying to God irrespective of whether it is loud or soft (or even unspoken), formal or informal, public or private'.[39] It is the address to God as 'Abba, Father!' that is in focus, not the way in which the prayer is offered. Paul speaks of something experienced by all Christians, not just by those who speak in tongues.

It is quite striking that the Aramaic word *Abba* was used in the prayer of the Greek-speaking churches of Galatia, which Paul founded (Gal. 4:6), but

was also apparently known to the Roman Christians, even before Paul's visit (Rom. 8:15). This widespread usage clearly recalls the Gospel tradition about the prayers of Jesus (cf. Mark 14:36). The evidence suggests that this homely and affectionate term was not used as an address to God by anyone else but Jesus in ancient Judaism.[40] Its use by Jesus expressed his consciousness of a unique relationship to God as Son. When he instructed his disciples to address God as Father (Luke 11:2; Mat. 6:9) he invited them to share to some extent in this relationship. 'The mere fact that the communities accepted this alien word into their prayers shows how conscious they were of the new element which had been given them in the cry "Abba".'[41] Whether or not Paul knew of the Lord's Prayer and was alluding to it remains a matter of debate. However, he certainly affirms that prayer to God as Father in this intimate sense is a sign of the possession of the Holy Spirit and of the gift of sonship. Such assurance in the present is a guarantee of ultimately inheriting with Christ the resurrection to eternal life (Rom. 8:17–25).

Although the apostle does not draw out more fully the implications of this address to God for the prayer life of believers, he regularly invokes God as Father in a variety of ways in his own prayers. Since he is 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' (2 Cor. 1:3; Rom. 15:5–6; cf. Col. 1:3), and since we share in Christ's sonship, he is 'our God and Father' (1 Thess. 3:11) or 'God our Father' (2 Thess. 1:1). Paul's readiness to appeal to the Father in each and every situation and his constant exhortations to others to join him in confident intercession arise from the kind of assurance about God's character expressed in Rom. 8:32 ('He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all — how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?'). The very fact that God can be addressed as Father is a constant reminder of the central truth of the gospel and therefore of God's commitment in love to the total welfare of his children. There can be no greater encouragement to believing prayer.

B. Prayer, Suffering and the Christian Hope

There is a movement of thought in Rom. 8:17 from sonship to inheritance, thus introducing the notion of the Christian hope. Life in the Spirit is shown to be a life characterised by hope. However, the same verse mentions the need to share in Christ's sufferings, 'in order that we may also share in his glory'. The whole segment from v.17 to v.25 illustrates the truth that the Christian hope must be exercised in the painful context of a fallen world. In v.18 there is the fundamental assertion that 'our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us'. Three illustrations of this principle are then given in association with the use of the verb 'to groan' in v.22 (*sustenazei*) and v.23 (*stenazomen*) and the corresponding noun in v.26 (*stenagmois*).

The *whole creation* is first personified as 'groaning in travail together' (RSV), the latter image implying that these are the birth pangs of the new creation which God is bringing into being. Yet even *Christians*, who possess 'the first-fruits of the Spirit', groan inwardly as they await the public manifestation of their adoption as God's children and liberation from the futility and decay of the present order at the redemption of their bodies. The complete enjoyment of our salvation still lies in the future, and we must

therefore live in hope (vv.24–5). The groaning in question should probably therefore be understood as a longing for the consummation of God's purposes. As Paul says in Gal. 5:5, 'By faith we eagerly await the righteousness for which we hope.' A further reference to groaning occurs in v.26 in connection with *the Spirit*. In the context of a creation 'subjected to frustration' (v.20), 'the Spirit helps us in our weakness' by interceding for us 'with groans that cannot be expressed' (v.26).

It has been argued that it is an error 'to take as a starting point the experience of difficulty in prayer, widespread both in antiquity and today, and to draw Paul into this'.[42] However, while it is correct to interpret 'our weakness' (v.26) as a reference to the general condition of believers in a fallen world (vv.18–25), Paul immediately focuses on a particular problem with respect to prayer. Even prayer remains subject to ignorance, weakness and poverty. It is part of the paradox of Christian existence that we are moved to express in prayer a confidence about redemption received and hope of redemption to come, and yet at the same time 'we do not know what we ought to pray'.[43] Such uncertainty about the proper content or object of prayer may seem out of character for Paul, whose confident precision in thanksgiving and petition has been noted above. However, Rom. 8:26 suggests a struggle in prayer that would not by its very nature be manifested in the carefully formulated wish-prayers and prayer-reports of his letters.

The Spirit himself helps in our weakness by interceding for us. Intercession on behalf of believers is the special task of the exalted Christ in Rom. 8:34 and Heb. 7:25. In these two verses the very presence of the crucified and yet glorified Christ at the right hand of God is the reality behind the concept of his intercession.[44] His heavenly intercession is a metaphor for his continuing representation on our behalf at the judgment seat of God. The intercession of the Spirit, on the other hand, is *a work of petition on earth, in the lives of believers, here and now*. It is an entreaty 'with unspoken groanings' (RSV),[45] since the Father knows the Spirit's intention without it being expressed. The idea that God searches the secrets of human hearts is found at many places in Scripture (*e.g.* 1 Sam. 16:7; 1 Kgs. 8:39; Jer. 17:10; Acts 1:24; 15:8). How much more must the Father know the unspoken desires or mind of his own Spirit, who intercedes according to the Father's will on behalf of his children!

There is a long tradition of interpretation going back to Origen and Chrysostom that regards Rom. 8:26–7 as a reference to tongues-speaking: our human languages are incapable of conveying what we want to say to God but the Spirit prays in believers enabling them through tongues to express what is necessary.[46] Some have taken this specifically as a reference to congregational tongues-speaking. 'Heavenly speech can be heard in worship as a work of the Spirit', yet it reveals, not the power and wealth of the Christian community, but its poverty, for 'the Spirit himself has to intervene if our prayers are to have a content which is pleasing to God'![47] However, if the word *stenagmois* is interpreted in the light of the groaning mentioned in vv.22–3, it is hardly consistent with the sort of ecstatic praise so characteristic of tongues-speaking. Furthermore, v.23 refers to a groaning that proceeds from believers, presumably by the Spirit's inspiration, but v.26 refers to *the Spirit's own unspoken groanings*, doubtless frequently imperceptible to Christians themselves.[48] In simple terms, the work of the Spirit mentioned here is to lay bare all the deep and hidden needs of the saints before God. In Rom. 8:15

and Gal. 4:6 the Spirit prays with us and through us, crying to God from our lips in ordinary human language. In Rom. 8:26–7 the Spirit prays *for* us, without words, in our own heart.

Thus, although the apostle places great emphasis on the importance of regularly expressing praise, thanksgiving and confident petition to the Father, he reminds us that our prayers are subject to the limitations of our personalities and our very existence in this world. There are times when we do not even know what we ought to pray. However, the assurance of this passage is that even in this dilemma God knows our deepest needs, for the Spirit he has given us intercedes for us with groans for which we cannot account.

IV. PAUL'S EXHORTATIONS TO PRAYER

Throughout the letters of Paul there are general exhortations to prayer and special requests for prayer in connection with the apostle's own life and work. These indicate the particular importance of intercessory prayer in Paul's thinking.

A. General Exhortations to Pray

In Rom. 12:12,14 there are two related exhortations, linking rejoicing, hope, patience and constancy in prayer. It is interesting to recall that these themes are also linked in Romans 8. The Spirit's essential work is to enable us to express our trust in the Father, even in the midst of suffering. Such prayer is a manifestation of our adoption as God's children in the present and of our hope of sharing the glory of God.

The context suggests that the prayers mentioned in Rom. 12:12 will be for others in the body of Christ. Believers will need to ask God constantly to reproduce in their midst the practical expressions of love that are listed in this chapter. Such mutual concern should be reflected in the lives of all who are truly the children of God. The exhortation in v.14 focuses on the sort of prayer necessary for enemies and persecutors ('Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse'). These words echo the teaching of Jesus (Mt. 5:44; Lk. 6:28) and indicate the way to express patience and trust in God in a situation of persecution.

Rejoicing always, praying constantly and giving thanks in all circumstances are mentioned together in 1 Thess. 5:16–18 as 'the will of God in Christ Jesus' for everyone in the congregation. In Phil. 4:4–7, rejoicing, praying and giving thanks are linked together again in an extended exhortation. While the context of this letter suggests that Paul wanted them to pray for himself as he faced the prospect of death (1:19), 'the main emphasis here must be upon their united thanksgivings and supplication in regard to *their own anxious situation*'.[49] In each of the exhortations mentioned so far, prayer for the effective functioning of a congregation in love may be seen to be the primary concern of the apostle. In Phil. 4:6–7 prayer is presented as an antidote to anxiety, and the assurance is given that 'the peace which God himself has' may be shared by those who express their trust in him in this way.[50] Three synonyms are used to describe the activity of *asking* God for something (*proseuchē*, 'prayer'; *deēsis*, 'petition' or 'supplication'; and *aitēmata*,

'requests'). Even though God knows the secrets of our hearts it is an appropriate expression of our relationship to him that we should actually ask him to meet our needs, acknowledging our total dependence on him. However, despite this emphasis on petition, the importance of asking 'with thanksgiving' is to be noted. 'To begin by praising God for the fact that in *this* situation, as it is, he is so mightily God — such a beginning is the *end* of anxiety.'[51]

We will conclude this section with a comment on the exhortation to pray in Eph. 6:18–20. The Christian's struggle against the powers of evil is highlighted in vv.10–17, where the armour of God is said to provide all that is necessary for us to resist and stand firm to the end. Although some commentators have argued that prayer in vv.18–20 is the seventh weapon with which God equips the saints, no specific piece of armour is mentioned in connection with prayer. Furthermore, in the closest parallel in Col. 4:2–4 and in Paul's other letters, prayer is never called a weapon or a fight.[52] The verb 'to stay awake' is not a military term requiring the interpretation that Christians are assigned to strategic watchposts. However, the use of the present participle 'praying' in Eph. 6:18 (*proseuchomenoi*) suggests a very close link between this activity and the preceding exhortations to put on the various pieces of armour.[53] Our faith in the promises and provisions of God must be *exercised in prayers and supplications*. Indeed it may be said that the prayers we offer are 'keys by which to come to the treasures that God reserves for us and which he will not keep from us. Therefore we must open the way to them by praying'.[54]

In view of the conclusions reached above from Romans 8, praying 'in the Spirit' (Eph. 6:18; cf. Jude 20) should not be taken to mean tongues-speaking or wordless prayer but *petition inspired by the Spirit*.[55] The Spirit enables believers to pray in the light of the gospel, with the certainty that they have a loving Father who has their best interests at heart and can provide all they need to love and serve him, until they come at last to share in their inheritance with Christ in glory. Spirit-inspired prayer will be prayer based on the truths of the gospel. The importance of prayer in the spiritual battle is highlighted by the use of the expressions 'at all times' and 'with all prayer and supplication'. Watchfulness here and in Col. 4:2 may mean keeping spiritually alert or more specifically being expectant of the coming of God's kingdom.

The prayer in view at the beginning of Eph. 6:18 is best understood as the sort of petition that Christians should offer for *themselves* in their stand against 'the devil's schemes'. However, it is clear from the latter half of the verse that they are also to persevere in prayer for *one another* in this way. With the exhortation to pray 'for all the saints' comes a special request to pray for the apostle, that he might have liberty to exploit every opportunity for gospel witness, even as 'an ambassador in chains' (vv.19–20). This brings us finally to a consideration of Paul's appeals to his readers for specific intercessory prayer support.

B. Specific Requests for Prayer

The material under this heading may be classified as follows. There are indirect appeals for prayer in Phil. 1:19 and Phm. 22, and direct appeals in 1 Thess. 5:25; 2 Thess. 3:1–3; Rom. 15:30–2; and 2 Cor. 1:11. In Eph. 6:18–20

and Col. 4:2–4 general exhortations to prayer are coupled with specific requests to intercede for the apostle and his work. By way of example, Rom. 15:30–2 will be examined.

As noted above, Paul's request for prayer-support comes in the context of declaring his travel plans (15:22–9) and as a sequel to the report of his own prayers in this connection (1:8–15). The importance of this passage is indicated by several factors: his use of the verb *parakaleō* ('exhort', cf. 12:1), his address to the Roman Christians as 'brothers', his appeal to the authority of their common Lord and the love by which the Spirit binds them together ('I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit', 15:30) and his use of the extraordinary verb *sunagōnisasthai* ('strive together', NIV 'to join me in my struggle', cf. Col. 4:12) to emphasise *the earnestness, urgency and persistence with which they must join him in praying to God.*[56] Although some commentators have portrayed prayer as a struggle with God, comparable with Jacob's wrestling with God (Gen. 32:22–32), there are no verbal similarities to suggest an allusion to that text here, and the notion of trying to exert pressure on God through prayer is foreign to Paul's teaching. Paul uses the *agōn* terminology to describe his own costly apostolic mission, understood as a striving for the gospel — a continual contest against opposition in the eschatological age (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24–7; Col. 1:29; 2:1).[57] The believers at Philippi are said to be involved in the same struggle for the gospel as Paul (Phil. 1:30). It may be, therefore, that in Rom. 15:30 Paul is saying that the Romans can *share in the struggle of his own apostolic ministry as they unite in prayer for him.*[58]

It seems likely that Paul had multiple motivations for writing Romans but that his missionary plans lie at the heart of his concern. Rom. 15:23–29 indicates that he had firmly in mind three important journeys: to Jerusalem, to Rome and to Spain. 'Each of these trips is directly connected with his work as an apostle to the nations/Gentiles, and each one, in its own way, is related to the occasion and purpose of Romans'.[59] Paul's request for prayer-support in regard to these journeys (15:30–2) is thus *essential to his purpose in writing.* The argument of the epistle reaches its climax with this appeal: the apostle hopes that the addressees will be 'moved to begin united prayer for him, and that by their continuing supplications they themselves may be given that responsible maturity about which he himself has been praying' (15:5–6,13).[60] Furthermore, as they unite in praying for him, they will be ready to receive him, to refresh him, and to facilitate his journey to Spain (v.24). Indeed, it appears that the apostle's aim was to establish a base of operation and support in Rome for his new sphere of ministry in the west of the Empire.

He first urges the Roman Christians to join him in praying for deliverance from the hostility of unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem, knowing how intensely his law-free gospel has been opposed by Jews everywhere (v.31a). Much of Romans has been given over to an exposition of that gospel. He next urges prayer for a right reception by the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem of the collection from the Gentile churches (v.31b). This collection is to be an expression of the gratitude of the Gentiles to the Jewish saints for the blessing of the gospel which has come to them from Jerusalem (15:26–7). It is to be a tangible expression of the theology outlined in Romans 11. The final request in v.32 expresses the more distant hope of coming to Rome 'with joy' and 'being refreshed' in the company of the Christians there. The fulfilment of this

hope clearly depends on the satifactory realisation of the hopes expressed in v.31. In so praying, the Romans are to acknowledge that these plans can only be fulfilled 'by God's will' (v.32, cf. 1:10). The wish-prayer of v.33 asks that 'the God of peace' might be with them, implying that he will unite them in the fellowship of the gospel and bring them all that is entailed in the enjoyment of his peace.

V. CONCLUSIONS

By his example and teaching the apostle Paul indicates the importance of prayer for Christian theology and life. Praise and thanksgiving should continually be offered to God, honouring him as Creator and Redeemer. Such expressions of gratitude are a means of glorifying God because they acknowledge him as the source of every material and spiritual blessing. Paul's thanksgiving reports focus on the godly lives of his readers but the ultimate ground for his gratitude is the gracious work of God in Christ and its specific outworking in the experience of those addressed.

Although the appropriateness of intercessory prayer is sometimes questioned by contemporary writers,[61] the apostle expresses no doubts about its efficacy and its significance in the saving purpose of God. He clearly believed that God was in total control of people and events and that he could overrule the hostility of every opponent, unite disputing Christians, open the way for the gospel to be preached in new lands and grant the gift of faith in response to gospel preaching. Knowing God's intention that the gospel should be heard in every place (cf. Rom. 1:5–6; 15:18–21;), he made his plans to preach Christ where he had not already been named and submitted those plans boldly and directly to the sovereign will of God in prayer. Paul knew that God in his wisdom had decreed that *his people should pray for his will to be done*. Thus believers were urged to pray that God would 'open a door' for the gospel, providing the apostle with a field in which to work, enabling him to 'proclaim the mystery of Christ', and to make it known as he ought (Col. 4:3–4, cf. Eph. 6:18–20). They were encouraged to pray that the word of the Lord might 'spread rapidly and be honoured' in other places as it did in their midst and that the apostolic team might be 'delivered from wicked and evil men' (2 Thess. 3:1–2). Such prayers were not merely an expression of commitment to the work of the gospel but a genuine calling upon God to act to fulfil his purposes in the ways outlined.

Thus there is no escaping the centrality of intercessory prayer to Paul's theology of mission. His own reports of thanksgiving and intercession are filled with the language of his missionary preaching, indicating further the connection between the work of the gospel and prayer. Growth to maturity would take place as God enabled believers to work out in their lives the practical implications of the gospel they had received. However, even more fundamentally, Paul taught that prayer to God as Father, on the basis of the atoning work of Jesus Christ and inspired by the Holy Spirit, is an indication of the redeemed status of the children of God. The gospel message elicits in true believers a trusting obedience that enables them to approach the Father with confident requests for themselves and others. Such prayer is an

expression of *a privileged relationship in the present*, which carries with it the hope of sharing the glory of God. Petitionary prayer is thus an important means of persevering in faith and obedience in the midst of all kinds of testing.

6

Prayer in the General Epistles

DAVID G. PETERSON

I. PRAYER MATERIAL IN HEBREWS

Following the writer's own designation of his work as a 'word of exhortation' (13:22), Hebrews may be described as 'a homily in written form, with some personal remarks at the end'.[1] Although the document is classified for convenience amongst the General Epistles it is far from being 'general' in its orientation. The argument is best understood as being directed to a specific group of Jewish Christians, whose situation is well known to the writer.[2] His method of exhortation is to reflect on certain key texts from the Old Testament in the light of the coming of Christ and to apply them to the needs of his readers.

Hebrews deals indirectly, though profoundly, with the subject of prayer in the key exhortatory passages which begin and end the central doctrinal section (4:14–16; 10:19–22). Fundamental to the writer's teaching on this subject is his portrayal of the Son of God, 'during the days of [his] life on earth', expressing his obedience to the Father in prayer (5:7–10). Having become 'the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him', he now lives to intercede for all who draw near to God through him (7:25). Thus, the prayers of Christ are an important part of the argument by which the writer urges Christians to approach God with confidence. As in many of the Pauline letters, there is also an encouragement to the original recipients to intercede for the writer (13:18 19) and a concluding wish-prayer (13:20–1,25; this category is discussed in the preceding chapter of this book).

II. THE PRAYERS OF CHRIST

A. Prayers in the Face of Suffering

In Heb. 5:1–10 the writer is concerned both to compare and to contrast the priesthood of Christ with the levitical priesthood of Judaism. He does this with an argument that is structured to make vv.7–8 correspond to vv.2–3.[3] The focus of the latter is on the need for the levitical priests to exercise their mediatorial role with restraint or moderation. Since they themselves were 'subject to weakness' and in need of sacrifice for their own sins, they should

have been able to restrain or moderate their anger in dealing with their fellow Israelites.[4] The Son of God had to be 'made like his brothers in every way' (2:17) in order to achieve a perfect sympathy with them in their weaknesses (4:15), to offer himself as the perfect sacrifice for their sins, and thus become 'the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him' as 'high priest in the order of Melchizedek' (5:9–10). In the flow of the argument, 5:7–8 describes how he acquired that sympathy and was perfected as the high priest of his people.

Any suggestion that Christ 'offered' prayers and supplications (v.7), first for himself and then subsequently for the people, through his suffering (vv.8–9), presses the parallel between Christ and the priests of Judaism too far. There is no equivalent in Jesus' case of the sacrifice offered by the OT high priest for his own sins, since Jesus remained 'without sin' through all the experiences of testing he endured (4:15). However, the struggle portrayed in 5:7 is clearly an important part of the process by which he was 'perfected'.[5]

Heb. 5:7 has been taken to refer to the whole period of his ministry, 'in which he was subject to the weakness of the natural earthly life, and therefore had to conquer the dread of pain and death which is inseparable from this state'.[6] However, most commentators argue that the prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane is specifically in view because we are told that Jesus prayed to God as 'the one who could save him from death'. It may be that this event is recalled as the supreme example and climax of Christ's life and prayer. At all events, the wording of 5:7 seems to reflect the two stages or aspects to the prayer of Jesus found in our Gospel records: the offering of 'prayers and petitions, with loud cries and tears, to the one who could save him from death' corresponds to 'Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me' and the statement that 'he was heard because of his reverent submission'[7] corresponds to 'yet not my will but yours be done'.

Some say that the answer to Christ's prayer was strength to endure the bitter ordeal facing him. Others see this solution as inadequate: 'the prayer was to be saved from death, and the hearing must correspond to this; mere strengthening to bear death (Luke 22:43) seems to fall far below its meaning'.[8] However, it seems best to argue that Christ was heard 'not with respect to his immediate object, exemption from death, but with regard to his final and ultimate object . . . agreement with the will of the Father'.[9] It was Jesus' prayer for the Father's will to be done that was answered in the glory and victory of the cross and the resurrection. By his sufferings Christ was taught how far God ought to be submitted to and obeyed.

Two important dimensions to the prayers of Jesus are thus on view. Jesus expressed in prayer his struggle to do the will of God when the ordinary human fear of death and suffering, and the particular fear of death as the place of expulsion and God-forsakenness, tempted him to turn aside. This was part of the process by which he learned 'to sympathise with our weaknesses' and at the same time learned 'obedience from what he suffered' (v.8). However, when he reverently submitted himself to the Father's will, he became 'the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him' (v.9). Thus, this teaching about the prayers of Jesus supports the writer's previous statement that 'because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted' (2:18), and offers further encouragement for believers to seek his help in the way outlined in 4:14–16. Nevertheless, at the

same time the writer is demonstrating that the prayers of Jesus were the means by which he finally expressed the obedience that led him to the cross and enabled him to offer the unique sacrifice that inaugurated the new covenant (cf. 10:5–10). We may add that Christ's prayers also function as an example, informing Christians how they should pray in the face of suffering, that even by this means they may learn obedience.

B. Heavenly Intercession

In 5:7–10 the prayers of Jesus are presented as part of the process by which he was perfected and became 'priest for ever in the order of Melchizedek'. The nature of this priesthood and its relation to the levitical priesthood is further expounded in ch. 7, where the insufficiency of the old priesthood is uncovered in vv.11–19 and the permanence and effectiveness of the new priesthood is stressed in vv.20–28. There the superiority of Christ's priesthood is fundamentally attributed to the fact that he continues in his office for ever (vv.20–4). This is so because of his resurrection-ascension (cf. 'on the basis of the power of an indestructible life', v.16). The logical inference in v.25 is that Christ is able to save 'completely'[10] those who draw near to God through him, 'because he always lives to intercede for them'. Here the writer speaks of the 'working out of salvation to the uttermost in those who have received the Gospel'.[11] It is another way of saying that he can bring his people through all their trials to share in his glory (2:10) or the heavenly rest (4:1) or 'the city that is to come' (13:14).

The NT uses the verb *entunchanein* twice with the meaning 'to approach someone with a complaint' (Rom. 11:2; Acts 25:24) and four times with the sense 'to intercede for as a representative' (Rom. 8:26 and 27 [the Spirit]; Rom. 8:34 and Heb. 7:25 [Christ]). The notion of Jesus as heavenly intercessor at the right hand of God may also be implied by Acts 7:55–6; 1 Pet. 3:21–2; and 1 Jn. 2:1–2. Some writers have suggested that the idea of an ongoing priestly ministry in heaven conflicts with the dominant view of the atonement in Hebrews as something accomplished once-for-all in Jesus' death.[12] However, 7:25 is not 'a foreign element' to the writer's presentation but reflects the perspective of the two exhortations in 4:14–16 and 10:19–25. The three references are concerned with Christians persevering to the end. The 'mercy' promised to those in need and the 'help' that is available from the ascended Christ (4:14–16) suggest the role of a heavenly intercessor. The priests of Judaism *stood* daily, offering the same sacrifices for sin. Jesus has offered the perfect sacrifice in his death and now *sits* enthroned in the heavenly sanctuary, applying the benefits of his finished work to those who draw near to God through him (10:11–23).

There is no justification for the view that, by some continuous liturgical action in heaven, Christ 'pleads the sacrifice' made on Calvary.[13] In the ritual of the Day of Atonement, the very presence of the high priest in the Holy of Holies witnessed 'to the continued preservation of the established relation of man to God'.[14] Thus, the climax of the work of Christ in Hebrews is his entry into heaven, 'now to appear for us in God's presence' (9:24). The presence of the crucified and yet glorified Christ with God is the reality behind the concept of his heavenly intercession and this is 'really and simply equivalent to his expiatory activity, carried out once in earthly history and brought up

against eternity in the celestial order'.[15] Another way of expressing the significance of Christ's heavenly intercession is to say that in *his* approach to God by means of his death, resurrection and ascension, *believers* have been granted 'a better hope' by which to draw near to God (7:19): the basis of the drawing near is now 'stronger and surer and more complete than in the OT and later Judaism'.[16]

III. THE PRAYERS OF CHRISTIANS

A. Drawing near to God

In the key exhortatory passages that begin and end the central doctrinal section of Hebrews the writer challenges his readers to hold fast their confession (4:14; 10:23) and to keep on drawing near to God on the basis of the finished work of Christ (4:15–16; 10:19–22).[17] The greatness of Jesus as high priest consists in 'his access to God, not through any material veil, but through the upper heavens; he has penetrated to the very throne of God in virtue of his perfect sacrifice'.[18] However, if such an emphasis on the transcendence of Christ suggests his remoteness, the writer insists that we have a high priest who is able to sympathise with our weaknesses, because he has been 'tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin' (4:15). It is clear from 5:7–8 that the sympathy of Christ the exalted high priest is 'not simply the compassion of one who regards suffering from without, but the feeling of one who enters into the suffering and makes it his own'.[19]

The verb *proserchesthai* ('to draw near') appears at a number of significant points in our writer's argument (4:16; 7:25; 10:1,22; 11:6; 12:18,22). The description of the Israelites in 10:1 as 'those who draw near to God' recalls a common cultic application of this verb in the Greek version of the OT (*e.g.* Exod. 16:19; 34:32; Num. 10:3–4). On the other hand, the use of the same verb in 11:6 to describe *a relationship with God in a more general and non-cultic sense* should warn us against the interpretation of this concept in Hebrews in purely cultic terms.[20] The verb *engizein* is used as a synonym in 7:19.[21]

In Heb. 7:25 the context suggests that *a new relationship with God through the mediation of Christ* is in view: 'a better hope is introduced by which we draw near to God' (7:19) and this hope is based on the 'better covenant' of which Jesus is guarantee (7:22) and mediator (8:6). This definitive drawing near to God is usually portrayed in Hebrews in modified cultic terms: it is through the high-priestly mediation of Christ in his death and exaltation that access to the heavenly sanctuary of God's own presence is made possible. In 12:18–24 there is an extended contrast between the approach of the Israelites to God at Mt. Sinai and the approach of Christians to God in the heavenly Jerusalem. The perfect tense in 12:22 (*proselēluthate*, 'you have drawn near') seems to locate this new approach to God at some moment in the past, namely at baptism or conversion.

Viewed against this background, the encouragements to keep on drawing near (4:16; 10:22) call for special comment. If the essence of the Christian position is to draw near to God through Christ, this direct approach to God needs to be expressed continually as an ongoing relationship of trust and

dependence. In 4:16 the challenge is to draw near to 'the throne of grace', which may be taken as 'the antitype, in our author's mind, to the "mercy seat" in the earthly sanctuary' or more simply as 'a Hebraic periphrasis for God himself'.[22] The particular need expressed here is to 'receive mercy' — presumably for past failures — and to find 'grace to help us in our time of need'[23] — presumably for faithfulness in running the Christian race (cf. 2:18). This suggests that confession of sin and petitionary prayer are specifically in view. The verb *proserchesthai* can certainly have such a special reference (cf. Gen. 18:23; Jer. 7:16).

Taking up the imagery of preceding chapters, 10:19–22 presents the notion of freedom of access to God in terms of freedom to enter the heavenly sanctuary. However, the heavenly sanctuary appears to be another way of describing the heavenly Jerusalem, to which Christians have already drawn near by faith in coming to Jesus (12:22–4). The writer therefore seems to be stressing the importance of *continually expressing in the present the enjoyment of eschatological realities*:

> Through Christ, their high priest, Christians may approach God in the sanctuary of heaven and of the world to come. In their worship they participate in the heavenly worship of angels and of the perfect saints. Having in prayer access to God through Christ, they have already a share in the life of the new, eschatological world.[24]

Thus in 10:22, drawing near 'with a sincere heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water' may refer to ongoing 'personal appropriation of salvation'.[25] This is the antidote to apostasy — the way to avoid shrinking back and being destroyed (10:39)! On the other hand, it should be noted that the exhortation to draw near in 10:22 is in the context of a warning not to abandon the local Christian assembly, and it could well be that the writer's concern was for them to express *corporately* their grasp of salvation by regularly drawing near to God together in prayer.

B. The Christian's Confidence

The exhortation to draw near 'with confidence' (*meta parrhēsias*) in 4:16 confronts us with another key concept in the presentation of Hebrews (cf. 3:6; 10:19; 35). In the Greek political sphere the word *parrhēsia* was used with three shades of meaning: the right of the full citizen to say anything in the city assembly, 'openness to truth' and 'the courage of openness, *i.e.* candour'.[26] In the private sphere it denoted candour and was especially used to describe the freedom of friends to speak the truth and not flatter one another. The Christian's freedom of speech in Hebrews has two sides:[27]

> . . . the free right to approach God, given in the sacrifice of Christ, which is the essence of the Christian faith, and the open confession of this faith, which is an unshakeable hope. These two sides are an inseparable unity. In the situation in which the Christians live they need it as a gift and a task.

Although there is clearly a subjective dimension to the confidence of which the writer speaks — a boldness to approach God 'in spite of the frankest

recognition of our sins'[28] — the language of 10:19 ('confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus') indicates the objective basis of such boldness in the death of Jesus. Indeed, *parrhēsia* here means 'freedom of access to God, authority to enter the sanctuary'.[29]

Another way of expressing this right to approach God by means of the sacrifice of Christ is found in the language of 10:22. Two perfect participles *rherantismenoi* ('having been sprinkled clean') and *lelousmenoi* ('having been washed') refer to the benefits of the work of Christ applied to those concerned at some moment in the past and continuing to qualify them to draw near to God. The cleansing of the heart from an evil conscience recalls the imagery of 9:18–22, where the sprinkling of the people with blood was associated with the inauguration of the old covenant. In one sense, the sprinkling of the people of the new covenant is to be associated with Jesus' inauguration of the new way to God through his death (10:20; cf. 9:18). However, the probable allusion to Christian baptism in the expression 'our bodies washed with pure water' points to that action as the outward sign of the application of the benefits of Christ's sacrifice to the individual's heart.[30]

By this means the writer of Hebrews expresses in his own terms the sort of teaching found in Romans 5 about access to God through the saving work of Jesus. He also shows that this right of approach to God needs to be exercised and expressed in a life of prayer, drawing near with confidence to receive mercy and find timely help. In this respect he parallels somewhat the teaching of Paul about how the Spirit moves us to express our adoption as God's children by calling God Father (Rom. 8:15–16).

IV. PRAYER MATERIAL IN JAMES

The letter of James is a literary epistle, 'a tract intended for publication',[31] rather than a personal address to a specific congregation of Christians. The author is generally understood to have been James the Just, the brother of the Lord, and the greeting formula (1:1) presents him writing to Jewish Christian congregations scattered outside of Palestine (literally, 'to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion'). Although the sayings and proverbs of James may at first glance appear to be unrelated, it is 'far from a random collection of thoughts and sayings, but is a carefully constructed work'.[32] Within the structure of the argument, prayer is discussed at three significant points (1:5–8; 4:1–4; 5:13–18), suggesting that prayer is a key to the life of godliness and true worship that the writer seeks to promote in his readers. It is highly likely that James is recalling the promises of Jesus about answered prayer, especially those found in the Gospel of Matthew (*e.g.* Mt. 7:7–11; 18:19–20; 21:21–2). Without limiting what is possible on the basis of these promises, James shows that they apply to the person of wholehearted commitment to God, not the compromiser with the world.[33]

A. Prayer for Wisdom

The exhortation to seek wisdom from God in 1:5–8 could stand on its own as an introduction to an important theme in James. The Wisdom literature of Judaism has considerably influenced the style and contents of this letter, and in these works wisdom is not intellectual enlightenment but insight into the

will of God and the ability to apply it in everyday life (*e.g.* Prov. 2:10–19; 3:13–18; 9:1–6). Such skill for godly living — such 'wisdom from above' — is described in terms of its effects in Jas. 3:13–18 and contrasted with the wisdom that is 'earthly, unspiritual, of the devil'. Some have argued that wisdom in Jas. 3:17 is 'equivalent to Spirit in Gal. 5:22, or at least to the fruit of the Spirit'.[34] However, 'because what is produced by James' wisdom and what is produced by Paul's Spirit are similar does not mean that the two can be seen as equivalent concepts'.[35] Nevertheless, what is said about wisdom in Jas. 3:13–18 is pivotal to the argument of the letter because it produces the character and behaviour which is the central concern of the author.

Apart from the fact that Jas. 1:5–8 introduces an important theme in the letter as a whole, verbal links with the immediate context suggest that the wisdom in view is specifically 'the gift of God which enables one to be perfect or, in James's conception, to stand the test' (cf. 1:2–4).[36] Wisdom in James is thus 'a moral force to overcome temptation and testing, set in the context of temptation, desire and sin'.[37]

Since such wisdom is the gift of God, believers must ask for it with unwavering faith. The basis for confident prayer, when faith is sorely tested, is the character of God, as outlined in v.5. At this point James seems to reflect the similar teaching of Jesus in Mt. 7:7–12/Lk. 11:9–12. God is first described as one who gives 'sincerely' or 'without reservation',[38] which highlights the foolishness of approaching him with distrust or reservation. God also gives 'without finding fault' — not holding back his good gifts from his children because of their past failures. Those who ask God for wisdom can thus be assured that 'it will be given'!

From the qualification that follows (1:6–8), it is clear that the promise of answered prayer is only for the person who asks *in faith, without doubting.* Once again the teaching of Jesus is reflected, particularly as found in Mt. 21:21–2, where the same terminology is used. The faith in question is not simply a belief in God's willingness to give, but a fundamental trust in God that is expressed in lifestyle. This is indicated by the ensuing description of the person who doubts: just as the sea shifts and moves according to the strength of the wind, so 'the divided person has no fixed beliefs and direction'.[39] In 1:8 James coins the word 'double-minded' (*dipsychos,* lit. 'double-souled') to describe this person of divided allegiance, who is 'unstable in all his ways'. Such a doubter, who is so wavering in his commitment to God, should not think he will receive anything in answer to his prayers. The problem of self-interest and conflicting loyalties is raised again in Jas. 4:4–8, in connection with the problem of unanswered prayer (4:3). The necessity for a 'prayer of faith' is mentioned again in Jas. 5:15, where the focus is on asking for healing.

It would be legalistic to say that God will not answer the prayer of anyone who expresses the slightest doubt in his ability or willingness to give good gifts to those who ask him. However, when faith is tested by trials of one kind or another, the challenge to believers is to express confidence in God as one who gives without reservation and without reproaching, and so to receive the wisdom necessary for stability and growth through such trials.

B. Prayer for Personal Needs

In 4:1–2 James addresses the problem of strife in the community. Most commentators agree that the words 'wars' (*polemoi*) and 'fightings' (*machai*)

are used metaphorically to describe violent verbal disputes and that the teaching about the tongue is related to this (cf. 3:1–12; 4:11–12; 5:9). The source of such quarrels between individuals or factions is the 'desires' (*hēdonai*) which are described as permanently waging war (*strateuomenōn*) within the persons concerned: 'the human personality has, as it were, been invaded by an alien army which is always campaigning within it'.[40] Although the Greek sentence in v.2 can be punctuated differently (as in NIV), the reading of the RSV is to be preferred because it emphasises that *frustrated desire leads to violence* (as in v.1) and matches closely a pattern of moral exhortation common in the Hellenistic world of the first century AD:[41]

> You desire and do not have; so you kill.
> And you covet and cannot obtain; so you fight and wage war (cf. also NEB, NASB, GNB).

The root cause of struggles and conflicts between believers is thus shown to be frustrated desire. Within this context James writes about the importance of bringing needs and desires before God in prayer: 'you do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures' (v.3). There are not two classes of people mentioned here — those not praying at all and those praying with wrong motives — but one. The argument is structured in this way as a rhetorical device for emphasis. The simple truth is that their desires remain frustrated because they fight, argue and compete, instead of asking God for what they need. Although it is true that they pray, their prayers remain unanswered because their motives are totally selfish, seeking only to satisfy their desires (the word *hēdonē* occurs again, forming an inclusion between v.1 and v.3). The exhortation of this passage, therefore, is to commit every need to God, looking to him to meet those needs *in whatever way he chooses.*

Since God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble (v.6), it is essential that every prayer should be a form of submission to God and his will (cf. vv.7–10). As in 1:6–8, there is a qualification to the promise of answered prayer implied in 4:3: there must be a genuine intention to do God's will and a willingness to be satisfied with his solutions. Prayer is not the means of satisfying desires in the way that seems best to us. Wrongly motivated prayers will not be heard: 'God is no magic charm which must help if the proper words are uttered'.[42] The section that follows in 4:4–10 shows that self-centred prayer is an expression of spiritual adultery or friendship with the world. Those whose lives are governed by the love of pleasure and self-gratification make themselves the enemies of God — even in the way they pray! As in Hebrews, prayer is associated with an exhortation to 'draw near to God' (v.8; cf. Heb. 4:16). Effective prayer emerges from a genuine relationship with God. At the same time, prayer realises the extraordinary benefits of such a relationship.

C. Prayer for Healing

1. Prayer in All Circumstances

The concluding paragraph on prayer in Jas. 5:13–18 mentions first the

importance of calling upon God in any situation that may cause personal distress. The verb *kakopathei* (v.13) recalls the use of the cognate noun in v.10 to describe the 'suffering' (*kakopatheias*) of the prophets and suggests that James has in view the sort of testing experience outlined in vv.1–6. In such a context, prayer for patient endurance without grumbling or slander will be vital (cf. 5:7–12; 4:11–12). Alternatively, if someone is cheerful or happy (*euthumei*), it is easy for that person to forget that God is the source of the blessings being enjoyed and so the exhortation is to sing God's praises. As one commentator has rightly observed, 'turning to God in need is half the truth; turning to him in praise either in the church or alone when one is cheerful (whatever the situation) is the other half'.[43]

The third category of persons who need to pray are the sick, though James puts the emphasis on calling for the elders of the church to pray rather than exhorting the sick to pray for themselves. A sickness of acute onset is envisaged, confining the sick one to bed or at least to the house, so that he cannot go to the elders but must call them to come to him (v.14).[44] Although some have argued that the passage has to do with spiritual restoration rather than physical healing,[45] the verb *astheneō* and its derivatives in the NT generally refer to physical disease,[46] and it will be argued below that the primary reference in v.15 is to the raising of the sick person from bed.

2. *Prayer and Anointing*

The elders are called as representatives and leaders of the church, not because they have '*ex officio* healing power'.[47] In no way does the context suggest a special gift of healing associated with the office of elder. The focus is on 'the prayer of faith' (v.15) and it is clear that *all* believers are to pray for one another for healing (v.16). The action of the elders in praying over the person (*ep' auton*) suggests the laying on of hands (v.14). The aorist participle *aleipsantes* may indicate that anointing with oil was to precede the prayer for healing, but it is just as likely that a simultaneous action is to be understood. Although the Greek sentence clearly shows that prayer is the primary focus, anointing with oil 'in the name of the Lord' is an integral part of the act. It is sometimes argued that the use of oil in healing was not uncommon in the ancient world and that James was encouraging a combination of medical and non-medical methods, illustrating the principle by reference to the contemporary medicinal use of oil.[48] This interpretation is certainly possible, though the majority of commentators favour a religious or symbolic interpretation of the anointing. At a purely symbolic level it has been suggested that the anointing 'could be felt by the patient to reinforce the evidence of the ear that the Lord was being invoked by the prayer of faith to bestow upon him, if it should be his will, a miraculous cure'.[49]

We cannot conclude from this passage that anointing with oil is essential to the ministry of healing: 'the efficacy is tied, as in baptism, to the invocation of the name of Jesus and prayer'.[50] The expression 'the prayer of faith' (v.15) sums up the action described in the previous verse and keeps the focus of the passage on prayer. Consequently, in principle 'the ministry of healing is subject to the laws that govern prayer'.[51]

The unqualified promise that 'the prayer of faith will save the sick person' is given to assure us of the power and goodness of God and to encourage us to

pray confidently for healing. However, it cannot be taken in an absolute and unconditional sense to mean that God will always heal the sick when trusting prayer is offered. Such a mechanistic view of God binds him to fulfil what *we* think is right and leads to terrible doubts about the sufficiency of our faith when prayer is not answered. A prayer for healing must be qualified, like every other prayer, by a recognition that God's will in the matter is supreme (cf. 2 Cor. 12:8–10). There is no biblical warrant for the view that God gives an antecedent and specific knowledge to certain people regarding the granting of certain prayers, thus enabling the confidence in prayer of which the NT speaks. The prayer of faith is not somehow the 'prayer of special knowledge'.

3. *Forgiveness and Healing*

The promise that the prayer of faith will *save* the sick person is best taken in the context to refer to physical healing. The Greek verb *sōzein* often means 'to heal' in the New Testament (*e.g.* Mt. 9:21–2; Mk. 6:56; Lk. 8:50; Jn. 11:12) and *egeirein*, the associated verb in Jas. 5:15, is certainly used to describe the *raising* of people from a condition of sickness (*e.g.* Mt. 9:6; Mk. 1:31; Acts 3:7). Although it is possible that both of these verbs could be referring to the resurrection to eternal life, it is noteworthy that salvation in this sense is never portrayed elsewhere in the New Testament as the result of prayer. Furthermore, the notion of waiting until someone is extremely ill before praying for his or her salvation is totally out of character with the demand of Scripture to be reconciled to God and to lay hold of the gift of eternal life whenever the gospel is heard.

If the first part of Jas. 5:15 refers to physical restoration, the second part clearly gives a wider perspective on healing: there are mental, social and spiritual dimensions to sickness and healing. The form of the Greek sentence ('and if the sick person has committed sins, he will be forgiven') suggests that specific sins *may* have been the cause of the illness (cf. Mk. 2:5–11; 1 Cor. 11:29–30). James may mean that 'if God should effect a miraculous cure in answer to the elders' prayer of faith accompanied by anointing with oil in the name of the Lord, that would be a clear indication that any sins of the sufferer, which might have been responsible for this particular illness, were forgiven'.[52] However, in view of the exhortation to confess sins to one another in v.16 it may be assumed that some such confession is presumed by the language of v.15.

Having made a connection between healing and forgiveness, James goes on to speak about the importance of confessing sins to one another and praying for one another 'so that you may be healed' (v.16). A specific link with the previous verse is made by the word 'therefore', by further reference to prayer, and by the use of another verb 'to heal' (*iathete*). James 'consciously generalises, making the specific case of 5:14–15 into a general principle of preventive medicine'.[53] However, it is difficult to be certain about the extent to which he generalises in this text. It is likely that the healing on view in v.16 is still physical, and that the prayers intend the healing of sick members of the community by the forgiving of sins which may have caused such sickness.[54] Alternatively, it is possible that as James moves towards his concluding exhortation regarding those who have wandered from the truth (vv.19–20),

he is speaking about healing in the metaphorical and biblical sense of forgiveness and the restoration of fellowship with God and with his people (cf. Mt. 13:15; Jn. 12:40; Acts 28:27; 1 Pet. 2:24).

Although some form of public confession of sins may be intended, the language could just as easily describe informal, person-to-person confession amongst members of the congregation. There is certainly no specific role given to the elders in this context, but the confession is to be 'to one another': it is to be a *mutual* activity of confession followed by prayer for one another. Furthermore, this text should not be taken to mean that *all* sins must be publicly or privately confessed. It is likely that the sins in mind are specifically offences against other Christians which hinder fellowship and worship (cf. Mt. 5:23–4).

4. *Effective Prayer*

The prayer which James regards as effective for healing is described in v.15 as 'the prayer of faith'. Doubtless this expression is designed to recall the exhortation of 1:6 and the perspective of 4:1–10. It is to be a prayer arising from a single-minded devotion to God — a life expressing a genuine trust in God and his promises. This perspective is reinforced by the statement in 5:16 that 'the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective': it is to be the prayer of a person who is in a right relationship with God.[55] Elijah is then given as an example of a righteous person whose prayers had great effect (vv.17–18). In stressing that Elijah was 'a man just like us', James insists that such prayer is available to all who trust God and not simply to outstanding figures in biblical history. Although the narrative of 1 Kings 17–18 does not say that Elijah prayed for the drought, 1 Kgs. 18:42 implies that he prayed for the drought to end and it is a reasonable inference that he prayed for it to begin.

V. PRAYER MATERIAL IN 1 PETER

From earliest times this document has been classified amongst the General Epistles. It is addressed to Christians scattered throughout five provinces of Asia Minor (1:1) and, except for the concluding verses (5:12–14), there are no personal greetings. There appears to be no treatment of specific local issues, apart from the issue of suffering, but rather a focus on matters that must have concerned Christians in general as they faced opposition and persecution. Although some modern scholars have argued that 1 Peter is really a baptismal sermon in an epistolary framework, or even a baptismal liturgy, redrafted in epistolary style, the traditional view that it is a letter of exhortation addressed by the apostle Peter to a particular circle of churches is still widely held and vigorously maintained.[56]

In every chapter there is reference to some form of actual or potential suffering on the part of those addressed (*e.g.* 1:6–7; 2:19–21; 3:13–17; 4:12–19; 5:9), suggesting to many commentators that the chief concern of 1 Peter is with the conduct of Christians undergoing affliction and persecution. Great debate has raged about the nature and extent of this suffering, but it is most likely that the persecution envisaged is private and local in each province, originating in the hostility of the surrounding population, not yet an official

programme of opposition by the Roman government.[57] It is not surprising, then, to discover that prayer in 1 Peter is largely connected with this central issue.

As with the Pauline material, 1 Peter contains a range of indirect addresses to God such as opening and closing wish-prayers (1:2; 5:14), brief doxologies (4:11; 5:11) and the longer praise form in 1:3–4 (cf. vv.5–12). Additionally, there are incidental references to prayer (1:17; 3:7,12; 4:7) and what may be termed exhortations to prayer (4:19; 5:7; cf. 4:17).

A. Doxologies

After the opening address, with its greeting in the form of a wish-prayer ('Grace and peace be yours in abundance', 1:2), Peter provides an impressive paragraph glorifying God for the salvation prepared for those who believe in Jesus Christ (1:3–12). As in 2 Cor. 1:3 and Eph. 1:3, the expression 'Praise be to the God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' gives a quasi-liturgical introduction to the epistle. The formula 'Praise be . . .' (Greek *eulogētos,* Hebrew *baruk*) signals a form of praise to God found in the OT and later Judaism and called *berakah* (the Hebrew for 'blessing').[58]

It is a characteristic of this form of praise that the writer includes himself within the sphere of the blessings outlined. Since Peter turns from the first person plural to the second person plural at the end of v.4 ('kept in heaven for *you* . . .') we may say that the *berakah* merges into exhortation at this point. However, a note of praise and joy is sounded until v.9, and vv. 10–12 certainly belong to the paragraph both in terms of *subject matter* ('concerning this salvation . . .') and in terms of *form* (return to a somewhat declaratory style). Against those writers who argue that this passage and Eph. 1:3–14 are based on a liturgical form of prayer or hymn connected with the rite of baptism, it is more reasonable to conclude that in both passages we have 'an *ad hoc* prosaic creation in which the author, by means of exalted liturgical language (some of which was possibly borrowed from early Christian worship), praises God for his glorious plan of salvation, and edifies the readers.'[59]

As with Ephesians 1, the *berakah* in 1 Peter 1 has an *epistolary* and *didactic* function, establishing the language, style and tone of the letter, and introducing some of the leading ideas found later in the body of the letter. The primary reason for this hymn-like outburst is that God in his great mercy has 'given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ' (v.3, cf. 1:21, 23; 3:18–22). This living hope is further defined as 'an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade' (v.4) and as 'the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time' (v.5). The word 'salvation' occurs at the climax of the argument of vv.3–5, at the end of vv.6–9, and at the beginning of vv.10–12, suggesting that it is the key concept and linking idea in the whole section. The terminology of salvation is employed again at 2:2, 3:21 and 4:18, and the concept of hope permeates the epistle (*e.g.* 1:13,21; 2:12; 3:5,15; 4:6–7,13; 5:4,6,10). As Peter moves into exhortation in 1:6–9, he sets the ill-treatment his readers have been facing in the perspective of this hope. The challenge to rejoice in their sufferings is repeated in 4:13, where the context recalls some of the important perspectives of 1:3–12 — the notion of faith being proved, of sharing in the sufferings of Christ and thus sharing ultimately in his glory. The special emphasis of 1 Peter, therefore, is the need to praise God in the midst of affliction for the hope he has given us in Christ.

The idea of glorifying God by word and deed is stressed in 4:7–11, in a passage which concludes with a short ascription of praise to God ('To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen'). This doxology is intimately linked with the preceding assurance that God will provide the strength necessary for effective ministry and that all ministry must be for the glory of God through Jesus Christ. When Peter further exhorts those suffering as Christians to glorify God 'in this name' (4:16, NIV 'praise God that you bear that name'), he means more than expressing praise to God in Christ's name. In their capacity as Christians, or more specifically because they are called to suffer as Christians, they are to glorify God in word and deed.[60]

The perspective introduced in 1:3–12 is recalled and reaffirmed in 5:10–11, as the epistle draws to a close. God in his grace has called us to share in his eternal glory in Christ. Even though suffering as a Christian may be necessary for a little while, God himself will restore, establish, strengthen and settle those whom he has called to share in this glorious hope. The doxology in 5:11 ('To him be the power for ever and ever') emphasises the basis on which the preceding reassurances are based: believers can glorify God in the midst of suffering knowing that he has the dominion over all.

B. Incidental References to Prayer

Exhorting his readers to conduct themselves with fear throughout the time of their 'exile', Peter refers to the fact that the one whom they address as Father is to be their judge (1:17). The verb *epikaleisthe* can mean 'call' in the sense of 'surname' (cf. Acts 10:18), or 'invoke, appeal to' (cf. Acts 25:11–12) and thus 'pray' (cf. Acts 7:59). The last sense is the most appropriate in the context. As those called into a new relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ (1:2, 3–5, 13–16), they express their filial relationship by praying to him as Father. The noun 'Father' possibly alludes to the use of the Lord's Prayer or more generally to the practice of addressing God as Father which Jesus encouraged and which became the characteristic of primitive Christianity (cf. Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6).

Exhorting husbands to live considerately with their wives, Peter motivates them with this warning: 'so that nothing will hinder your prayers' (3:7). In the background lies the principle that a genuine relationship with God depends on right relations with other people (Mt. 5:23–4; 1 Cor. 11:17–34; Jas. 4:1–4; 1 Jn. 4:19–21). This is expressed in the context by the quotation from Ps. 34:15–16 (3:12), asserting that the Lord's ears are only open to the prayer of the righteous: 'the face of the Lord is against those that do evil'. It is not necessary to limit 'your prayers' in 3:7 to the prayers of the husbands themselves since the spiritual life of wives too may be severely disturbed by difficult domestic relations.

The priority given to prayer in Peter's teaching about Christian family relations is also reflected in 4:7 in his teaching about the Christian life more generally. The hope of Christ's return once more becomes the focus of Peter's teaching with the assertion 'the end of all things is near'. Two aorist imperatives stress the decisive action that must be taken in the light of this belief. The first challenge is to be self-controlled or sober-minded (*sōphronēsate*, cf. Mk. 5:15), keeping a cool head in view of the proximity of the end. The second challenge is to be sober or clear-headed (*nēpsate*, cf. 1:13), which

is a call to remain alert and in full possession of their faculties and feelings. Although it is possible that the expression 'for prayers' (*eis proseuchas*, NIV 'so that you can pray') could be taken with both imperatives, it is probably best to connect it only with the latter: they are to be fully alert in mind and attitude so that they can offer prayers of all kinds without distraction. The following verses suggest that prayers about relationships and ministry in the congregation should be uppermost in their mind as times of stress come upon them (4:8–11).

C. Exhortations to Pray

In a summary exhortation to those who suffer 'according to God's will' (4:19), Peter urges his readers to 'commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good'. Although a different verb is used in 2:23, there we are told that when suffering unjustly the Lord Jesus 'entrusted himself to him who judges justly'. The example of Christ is probably recalled again in 4:19 with language reminiscent of Jesus' prayer on the cross ('Father, into your hands I commit my spirit', Lk. 23:46 based on Ps. 31:5). Knowledge of God's character as Creator and Preserver should stimulate Christians continually to entrust themselves to his protective care. The words at the end of the verse indicate that the reality of such trust should be expressed in a life of good deeds, undeterred by hostility or affliction.

The final exhortation to pray comes as part of a call for humility under God's hand (5:6–7). Peter does not call for passive resignation so much as a voluntary submission to God's gracious will: Christians are to view their circumstances as part of his good purposes for them (4:12–19). Such submission is the necessary prelude to the exaltation promised to them (cf. Mt. 23:12; Lk. 14:11; 18:14). The words 'in due time' suggest that 'part of humility is willingness to wait patiently for things according to God's timetable'.[61] While our modern English versions rightly translate the next verb as an imperative ('Cast all your anxiety upon him'), the participle *epiripsantes* is 'structurally dependent on the imperative *humble yourselves* (v.6) and indicates a correlative action of the humble-minded'.[62] An important and positive aspect of humbling yourself before God is entrusting yourself and your troubles to him. The exhortation to cast 'all your anxiety' on the Lord, with the assurance 'because he cares for you', recalls Ps. 55:22 and the teaching of Jesus in Mt. 6:25–34 and Lk. 12:22–34. Clearly the voicing of such anxieties and the casting of such burdens on the Lord is an important aspect of the Christian life.

VI. PRAYER MATERIAL IN 1 JOHN

Commentators often observe that 1 John lacks the typical stylistic features of a letter and argue that it should be regarded as a 'tract' written to a church or churches known to the author: 'it is a written sermon or pastoral address'.[63] However, the carefully styled opening thematic statement, a recognisable epistolary close, and the rather substantial literary-thematic coherence of the document as a whole, suggest that it belongs in a class of general epistles known in the hellenistic world of the first century.[64] This is not to say that it is general in its address and contents: it is an appeal to a specific group of

believers to maintain the apostolic gospel against the unorthodox beliefs and behaviour of those who have gone out from their midst (2:19).

Prayer comes into focus in the first main section after the preface, where the theme is living in the light (1:5–2:29). Here a challenge to 'confess our sins' to God is presented (1:9). In the next main section, where the theme is living as children of God (3:1–5:12), there is teaching about confidence before God in prayer (3:21–2). In the epilogue or conclusion (5:13–21) there is further teaching about confidence and prayer, with a specific encouragement to pray for a brother committing 'a sin that does not lead to death' (5:14–17).

A. Confession of Sins

Summarising the apostolic message with the words 'God is light; in him is no darkness at all' (1:5), John begins to characterise the false opinions of those who walk in darkness (1:6; 1:8; 1:10) and counter these systematically with indications of what it means to walk in the light (1:7; 1:9; 2:1–2). The three false assertions are really variations on a single theme. There is firstly the error of denying that sin breaks our fellowship with God (v.6), then the error of denying that sin exists in our nature (v.8) and then the error of denying that sin shows itself in our conduct (v.10).[65]

The implication of vv.6–7 is that walking in the light involves renunciation of sin. The clear promise is then given to those who walk in the light that 'the blood of Jesus his Son purifies us from all sin' (v.7). However, the way in which the benefits of Christ's death are appropriated by the believer is not made clear until v.9. The conditional clause 'if we confess our sins . . .' really has the force of a command in this context.[66] This expression indicates that walking in the light involves acknowledging particular sins before God, not just admitting that we are sinners (cf. Ps. 32:1–5; Prov. 28:13). It is not necessary to conclude that some form of public confession is meant. The promise that 'he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness' (cf. Mic. 7:18 20) is the encouragement to confess. As if to provide further encouragement to turn from sins and seek God's forgiveness, John portrays Jesus as our advocate with the Father and as the atoning sacrifice for our sins (2:1–2).

With this portrayal of the person and work of Christ 1 John comes close to Hebrews (cf. Heb. 4:14–16: 7:25; 10:19–22). Although Jas. 5:16 speaks of the need for confession of sins, the nearest parallel to 1 Jn. 1:9 in the NT is the exhortation of Heb. 4:16 to draw near with confidence to the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. However, if such injunctions are not common, their importance is indicated by their place in the argument of both documents. John writes to urge his readers not to sin, but at the same time he urges them to seek God's forgiveness when they do! 'The picture is refreshingly different from the common Christian acceptance of the routine inevitability of sin and the almost mechanical provision for its treatment. There is here none of the sense of Christian life as an interminable rhythm of slip and recovery'.[67]

B. Confidence before God

A further parallel with Hebrews is to be noted in the use of the Greek word *parrhēsia*, meaning boldness or freedom of access to God (1 Jn.2:28; 3:21;

4:17; 5:14). In 2:28 and 4:17 the reference is to confidence before Christ on the day of his appearing, the day of judgment. The alternative is to be ashamed or to be fearful. In the earlier reference such confidence is the result of abiding in Christ, which involves letting the apostolic teaching abide in us (2:24–8). In the later reference it has to do with God's love being perfected in us: 'whoever still fears before God has still not reached the goal opened up to him by the gift of God's love'.[68] The context makes it clear that God's love is ultimately manifested in the atoning death of Jesus (4:9–10, 16–17), so that the Christian's confidence on the day of judgment is clearly the result of abiding in this gift of God's love. The context also indicates that God's love is perfected or reaches its goal when we love one another (4:11–12, 19–21).

A powerful exhortation to love one another in 3:11–18 precedes another passage about confidence before God in 3:19–22. In this context, confidence before God is granted as a present possibility to the person whose heart is freed from self-condemnation. Although John emphasises that our assurance depends on the saving work of Jesus, and that ultimately God knows us better than our own hearts know us (3:20), he insists that 'we will know we belong to the truth' and 'set our hearts at rest in his presence' (3:19) by loving one another in the way he has just outlined. 'Doing what is characteristic of the realm of truth is the sign that we belong to that realm.'[69] This then leads to a clear promise concerning prayer: 'if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.' The same connection between answered prayer and obedience to God's commandments occurs in John 15:16–17. This does not mean that God answers prayer according to the measure of our obedience but rather that God delights to answer the prayers of *those who are truly his children.* John's encouragement is for us to express that relationship to God by our obedience to his commandments and by a bold approach to him in prayer. These two fundamental aspects of the Christian life belong together and God is dishonoured when one is neglected.

The final statement about the Christian's confidence before God comes in 5:14–15, where prayer is again in focus. Since the Son of God is mentioned in v.13 as the one through whom we have the certainty of eternal life, it is possible that 'the confidence we have in him' (v.14) refers to confidence in Christ as mediator. In 3:22 the condition of answered prayer was that 'we obey his commands and do what pleases him'. Here we are told that the assurance we have in approaching God is that 'if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us'. The implication is that God-honouring prayer will express a desire to know and do the will of God: it will not be an attempt to persuade God to fulfil our own ambitions and desires (cf. Jas. 4:1–3). 'When we learn to want what God wants, we have the joy of receiving his answer to our petitions'.[70]

Echoing the teaching of Jesus in passages like Mk. 11:24, John affirms that because we know that God listens to us, we can be certain that *we have* what we asked of him (5:15), the tense of the verb *echomen* expressing present possession. Note again that the basis for certainty is not some specific revelation of the will of God to the person concerned but the knowledge that 'he hears us'. No greater encouragement to confident prayer could be given. The specific issue of praying for those in the community who have fallen into sin is then raised in 5:16–17. This is not merely an example of confidence in

prayer but a deliberate climax to the argument of the epistle, in which the relationship of sin to the Christian is a major theme (cf. 1:5–2:2; 3:4–10).

'A sin that leads to death' alludes to 'such wrongdoing as is incompatible with walking in the light and living as a child of God'.[71] It is a sin which a believer does not and cannot commit, whereas the 'sin that does not lead to death' is one which a believer can and does commit.[72] Deliberate rejection of the teaching that John has given leads inevitably to darkness and death. The 'sin that leads to death' probably refers to those who proved themselves not to be children of God by hating the 'brothers' and denying Jesus. Intercession for such people is not encouraged in 5:16 — 'I am not saying that he should pray about that' — but it is not forbidden. Rather, the focus of the passage is on interceding for the fellow believer who commits 'a sin that does not lead to death'. The promise is that God will give life in answer to such a prayer, which must mean in the context that God will not only forgive but also keep the sinner from pursuing the pathway of disobedience that leads to death (cf. Jas. 5:19–20). Such a prayer will be answered because it is clearly 'according to his will' (5:14).

VII. CONCLUSION

The so-called General Epistles share some important perspectives on prayer and make unique contributions in each case to our understanding of the role of prayer in the Christian life. In Hebrews the prayers of Jesus are presented as an expression of the obedience by which he became the source of eternal salvation for his people and now lives to make intercession for them. On this basis, the writer urges Christians to keep on drawing near to God with confidence, expressing their dependence on him for mercy and grace, not shrinking back in unbelief and disobedience. In 1 John there is a similar encouragement to be bold in prayer for forgiveness and more generally in petition, based on the atoning work of Christ. The encouragement in 1 John 5 to pray for other Christians who have sinned is paralleled in James 5. Both these epistles are also concerned to highlight the conditions in association with which God promises to answer prayer. The unique contribution of the letter of James is its focus on prayer for wisdom and prayer for healing. 1 Peter has a particular emphasis on praise and petition in the midst of persecution and affliction, though the issue of suffering is also to a certain extent present in the background of Hebrews and James. Thus, the subject of prayer is related to the central concerns of each one of these documents and related to a variety of practical situations in which believers throughout the centuries have continued to find themselves.

7

Prayer in Revelation

ESTHER YUE L. NG

I. INTRODUCTION

'The Book of Revelation seems to occupy one of two positions in most people's affections. Either it is almost totally neglected or it is elevated to a prominence shared by no other Biblical book.'[1] This observation by Graeme Goldsworthy seems justified to a large extent in places enjoying religious freedom. On the one hand, apart from the first three chapters and certain hymnic portions,[2] the book of Revelation is seldom preached from the pulpit, sung in church, or read in quiet devotions in some circles. To others, on the other hand, different schemes of the end-times based on the book are treated as absolute truth, confidently presented and eagerly received. Meanwhile various cults claim to be the elect 144,000 of Revelation 14 and decry mainline Christianity as the beast. By contrast, churches suffering from state persecution have found that the book of Revelation speaks to their situation and have derived much solace and strength from reading it.[3] This understanding of the book is by no means forced and arbitrary. As a matter of fact, one may say that the whole book of Revelation evinces an atmosphere of suffering amidst persecution. Thus the author tells us that he experienced affliction and was on the Island of Patmos on account of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus (1:9).[4] Other Christians were (or would be) put into prison and even killed for Christ's sake (2:11,13; 6:9; 11:7; 12:11; 13:10; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2; 20:4). In symbolic terms we are told that this suffering arose because the authorities (whether religious or political) usurped divine prerogatives and imposed a death penalty on all who refused to worship a designated image (13:6,7,15). In short, Christians were hard pressed between the sovereignty of God and that of the authorities. They had to decide whom to serve and worship.[5] It was in such a context that the book urged readers to persevere, to keep their faith (13:10; 14:12) and to overcome principalities and powers by the blood of Christ and by their testimony, even to the point of death (12:11).[6]

To achieve this purpose, the author has from time to time incorporated prayers of adoration, praise, thanksgiving and petition which, as we shall see in the course of our discussion, are highly relevant to his readers. But neither these prayers nor the contents of the book as a whole are meant for the first century Christians alone. The prayers in particular have an inherent beauty

and a timeless appeal that transcend different political situations or interpretations of the millennium or conceptions of the structure of the book. And it is to these prayers of adoration, praise, thanksgiving and petition that we now turn, to see what this strange yet God-inspired book has yet to teach us.

II. FORMS OF PRAYER

At the outset of his book on prayer, Wayne R. Spear points out the importance of defining prayer before one goes to study prayers on the Bible, for what one finds is governed by one's definition. Spear defines prayer as 'human speech that is addressed to God'. As there are many kinds of speech, so prayer may express adoration, thanksgiving, confession, submission, pledges of obedience and petition.[7] While not necessarily offering a definition of prayer, many works on prayer likewise regard praise, thanksgiving, supplication, and so on, as forms of prayer.[8]

If we adopt Spear's definition and scan the book of Revelation, we find that the passages clearly addressing God in the second person are as follows: 4:11; 5:9; 6:10; 11:17–18; 15:3–4; 16:5–6,7; 22:17,20.[9] However, this list must surely be expanded to include those passages where the context (*e.g.* 4:9–10; 5:14; 7:11; 19:4–5) clearly indicates God as the object of worship, even though the saying is couched in the third person. Thus we should add to our list 1:5b–6; 4:8,9; 5:12,13,14; 7:10,12; 19:1–2,3,4,6–8.[10] For a complete study on prayer in the book of Revelation, we should also include passages which mention prayers and worship being offered to God, even though the prayers are not recorded. These include the mention of the prayers of saints in 5:8 and 8:3, and of the song of the 144,000 in 14:2–3. Furthermore, the contexts of the above-mentioned passages should also be studied for insights on prayer.

Looking at the content of the prayers, we may readily separate them into two main categories: (1) prayers of petition or supplication for (a) God's vindication of martyred saints (6:10) and Christ's return (22:17,20); and (2) prayers of praise or thanksgiving (all the other references). The second and bigger category may further be subdivided according to form into five types which are here designated doxology, acclamation, attribution, thanksgiving, and hallelujahs.

A. Doxology (1:5b–6; 4:9; 5:13; 7:10,12; 19:1)

These statements generally take this form[11]:

To *A* be *x, y, z* or *x, y, z,* belong to *A*	where *A* stands for the object of praise, e.g. 'God', 'Lamb'; *x, y, z,* stand for nouns such as 'glory' or 'power'.

A good example of the doxology is found in 5:13: 'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honour and glory and power, for ever and ever!' In this case and in 1:5b–6; 4:9; 7:12; the phrase 'for ever and ever' is appended. Moreover, 1:6 and 7:12 have 'Amen' ('So be it' in Hebrew) at the very end. On the other hand, 19:1 gives the reason for praying to God.

All the doxologies in Revelation refer to God in the third person. This is similar to the form of doxologies in New Testament epistles. The doxology

David utters in 1 Chronicles 29:11 and that incorporated into the Lord's Prayer, however, address God in the second person.

B. Acclamation (4:11; 5:9,12)

We include here assertions of this form[12]:

$$\left.\begin{array}{c}\text{Worthy is } A \\ \text{or} \\ \text{You are worthy } (\pm A)\end{array}\right\} \quad \text{to receive } x,\ y,\ z.$$

An example of an acclamation occurs in 5:12: 'Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise'. In the case of 4:11 and 5:9, a reason is also given for the acclamation.

C. Attribution (4:8; 15:3–4; 16:5–6,7)

We include here statements describing the attributes of God bearing one of these two forms.

> (1) adjective(s) + verb 'to be' + articular noun(s)/participles in nominative case (object of prayer) ± adverbial clause stating reason
> (2) adjective(s) + noun phrase (acts of God) + nouns in vocative and nominative (object of prayer) ± clauses stating reason or result

An example of the first kind is found in 4:8: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty who was, and is, and is to come.' An example of the second kind is provided in 15:3–4 which reads in part, 'Great and marvellous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty . . . for your righteous acts have been revealed.'

D. Thanksgiving (11:17–18; 19:7–8)

In forms 1–3 and 5, all attention is focused on God, the object of prayer, while the subjects (participants) of prayer recede into the background.[13] Here, on the contrary, the participants' feelings of joy and gratitude come to the surface ('we give thanks to you', 'let us rejoice . . . and give him the glory'). In each case, reasons are given for this thankfulness. Thus 19:7 reads, 'Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come. . . .'

E. Hallelujahs (19:1,3,4,6)

'Hallelujah' or 'Praise Yahweh' is familiar to us from the Psalms (especially Ps. 113–18). Strangely, though, its use in the New Testament is restricted to the book of Revelation, and to four instances in ch.19 in particular. Here it may be followed by a doxology (in v.1), or preceded by an 'Amen' (v.4). In the other two occurrences, a reason is adduced each time for praising the Lord, namely, the eternal destruction of Babylon (v.3) and the dawning of the uncontested reign of God (v.6).[14] As an example of this category of prayer we may cite the familiar words of 19:6: 'Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.'

III. THEOLOGY REFLECTED IN THE PRAYERS

In this section we shall study the object of prayer, i.e. God himself, as seen in relevant passages in the Book of Revelation. The material is rich here: various titles, attributes, and actions ascribed to God together paint a colourful picture.

A. A Fundamental Assertion (4:8)

We may begin with the trisagion (or *Thrice Holy*) in 4:8 which seems to make a most fundamental assertion about God:[15] 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come.' In form, the trisagion belongs to the attribution type discussed above, the attribute 'holiness' (*hagios*) being repeated three times. While some exegetes have seen significance in the number three (as suggesting the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead), perhaps this reads too much into the text. What is asserted is primarily God's absolute transcendence: he is self-existent, independent and completely separate from all other beings. Perhaps the trisagion also secondarily hints at God's moral holiness: no iniquity or defilement resides within his nature (cf. Hab. 1:12–13; Heb. 7:26). This seems to be the conviction of the prophet Isaiah in his temple-vision of God, as he heard the trisagion of the seraphim (Is. 6:3) and sensed his own sinfulness (6:5).

In connection with God's apartness, we may note various features of the throne vision in ch. 4 which probably depict God's transcendence. Thus the one who sat on the throne had the radiant appearance of precious stones (jasper and carnelian); a rainbow like an emerald encircled the throne; lightning and thunder announced the glory of the shekinah; before the throne stretched a sea of costly transparent glass (like crystal) serving as a royal pavement and yet posing a barrier to human approach.[16]

The trisagion of Rev. 4:8 addresses God as 'Lord God Almighty (*kyrios ho theos ho pantokratōr*)'. The power or sovereignty of God over all the universe is thereby asserted. In line with the Old Testament, this attests the fact that God is not a victim of circumstances or man's manipulation. Furthermore, in the Septuagint, *pantokratōr* ('Almighty') is often the translation in the prophets for *Yahweh Sabaoth* ('Yahweh [the LORD] of hosts') which is the term used in Is. 6:3. On the other hand, it renders *El Shaddai* (the sufficient God) in Job. Therefore, if the Greek term carries the force of the Hebrew original, it means in addition 'the God who creates and sustains the hosts of creation and the God whose sufficiency is inexhaustible'.[17]

Finally, the trisagion of Rev. 4:8, like the author's greeting in 1:4, addresses God as 'he who was and is and is to come (*ho ēn kai ho ōn kai ho erchomenos*)'. This is a highly unusual construction in that *ho ēn* is literally 'the was', containing a finite verb and not a participle (as in the other two cases). Nevertheless, the meaning of the whole phrase is clear: it asserts the eternity of God (cf. Exod. 3:13; Ps. 90:2). This is perhaps to be equated with 'him who lives for ever', just as 'him who sits on the throne' seems the equivalent of 'Lord God Almighty' in 4:9.

So then the trisagion is a fundamental assertion about God's transcendence, sovereignty, sufficiency and eternity. It invites readers to lift their eyes above trying circumstances and ponder God. In the following, we shall consider the

trisagion's implications in the various roles ascribed to the first two persons of the Trinity.

B. God as Creator (4:11)

In Rev. 4:11 we read, 'You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being'. In this acclamation, God's creation is adduced as the reason for rendering him praise. Four observations are appropriate here. First, God is himself the creator. 'Here is direct refutation of the dualistic idea that God as spirit would not himself be involved in a material creation.'[18] Second, God created 'all things'. God brooks no rival, whether earthly potentates who usurp divine prerogatives or demonic powers roaming at large in the world. Nothing and nobody lies outside his knowledge and power. Thirdly, creation exists by God's will (*dia to thelēma sou*). The Greek here may mean either 'by your will' (treating God's will as the operating cause), or 'for the sake of your will' (seeing God's will as the intention of creation).[19] Finally, it is interesting to note that in the Greek text (contrary to the NIV rendering) the existence (being) of all things comes before their creation. This has been taken to mean that all things first existed in the will and mind of God before coming into actual being at the appropriate time.[20] But in a rhetoric of praise perhaps the sequence of words should not be unduly pressed.

As the creator of all things, God is apart from creation, is sovereign and has preceded all in time. Thus he is truly holy, almighty and the One who was (as 4:8 asserts).

C. Christ as Redeemer (1:5b–6; 5:9b–10)

In 1:5b–6 the doxology reads as follows: 'To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father — to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.' The mention of 'his blood' and 'his God and father' clearly indicates that Christ is the object (the 'him') of the doxology. Another passage that deals with Christ's redemptive work is 5:9b–10: 'because you were slain and with your blood you purchased men for God and from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.' Here the mention of the slain lamb (v.6) and the similarities to 1:5b–6 again point unmistakably to Christ.

In both cases, the shed blood of Christ is seen as the means by which people are ransomed or freed and made into a kingdom and priests to God. Now this bears striking resemblance to descriptions of the Mosaic covenant: Israel was meant to be 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' to God (Exod. 19:6); the blood of the Passover lamb saved the Israelites from death (Exod. 12), and blood was again employed in the covenant ceremony at Mount Sinai (Exod. 24). In other words, Christ as the slain lamb inaugurates a new covenant and constitutes a new Israel. Here, in line with the holiness of God emphasised in 4:8, redemption is seen as deliverance from sin (1:5b). In accordance with the notion of God as *pantokratōr* (Almighty), the new Israel comprises members

from 'every tribe and language and people and nation'. Moreover, unlike animal sacrifices in the Old Testament, Christ's offering was fully volitional (cf. 'who loves us' in 1:5b). Undoubtedly such descriptions of Christ's redeeming love and of Christian privileges in the new covenant serve to remind readers that no sacrifice is too big to make for him amidst persecutions.

While Christ has been compared to a lamb in other books of the New Testament (*e.g.* John 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7; 1 Peter 1:19), it is interesting to note that Revelation has a different word for lamb to describe Christ (*arnion* and not *amnos*). The word *amnos* commonly connotes meekness and is often used in the context of sacrifice. *Arnion,* by contrast, is often used in apocalyptic literature for a warrior lamb.[21] Thus in describing Jesus as a slaughtered *arnion,* the seer is compounding metaphors to drive home the point that the one who was slain brutally and ignominously is also the one who has conquered, holding all authority and power in his hands. Furthermore, whereas other New Testament references use the 'lamb' as a figure of speech, the seer in Revelation *sees* a Lamb standing (5:6), true to the book's genre as apocalyptic literature where visions of strange beasts convey their symbolic meanings much as animals in political cartoons do today.[22]

D. Christ as Executor and Revealer of God's plans for mankind (5:9a)

In the last section, we quoted 5:9b–10 in our discussion of Christ's redemptive work. Here we shall consider the acclamation in 5:9a — 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals. . . .'

The book of Revelation never explains the symbol of the scroll with its seven seals and it is therefore not surprising that attempts to crack the mystery are legion. Given the range of biblical[23] and contemporary[24] precedents, a tentative decision on the nature of the scroll can be reached only by studying the context of the book.

Since earlier John was told that he would be shown the things which must happen in the future (4:1), and since quite a sizeable portion of the book (chs.5,6, and 8:1) deals with the scroll and the seals (and concomitant with the opening of the seals are calamities occurring in the world), we may deduce that the scroll has to do with coming events on the world scene. Most likely the catastrophic events of ch.6 are part of the content of the scroll.[25] Further, first century readers of the Apocalypse probably would find in the seven-sealed scroll of Rev. 5 a reference either to the contract deed or to the testament.[26] If so, what is the content of the scroll that has great import for mankind and involves woes to come? How does the death of Christ qualify him to read and execute this contract deed or testament? In my opinion, the scroll in Rev. 5 contains God's decree on human destiny — God holds out the scroll to be opened, v.1 — including his promise of the kingdom of God to mankind. From Old Testament times God's plan included the election of a people and through them the government and blessing of the world (Gen. 12:2–3; 17:6–8; 18:18; 22:18; Exod. 19:5–6). Given the failure of Israel and the political uncertainties of the author's time,[27] it might seem that God's plans for mankind could no longer be revealed and executed — no one seemed able or worthy to open the scroll (vv.2–3). Christ, however, 'has retrieved the creation of God from unspeakable loss'[28] by dying on Calvary, thereby establishing a new covenant and redeeming a new Israel (vv.9–10; cf.

also the comments above on Christ's redemptive work). Christ had conquered as the kingly Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament (as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, and the Lamb with seven horns and seven eyes — vv.5–6) and was thus worthy and able to reveal God's decree and put it into effect. In short, Christ is the key to God's plan in human history. Even though sin has marred God's handiwork and suffering is prevalent, God's purpose for mankind is by no means thwarted. It is no wonder that ch.5 resounds with praise and song.

Yet God's love for mankind is spurned by many and his decrees must consequently involve warnings and judgment for the wicked. Before the final victory, then, the world will be embroiled in catastrophes and woes as the judgment of the seals, trumpets and bowls will show.

E. God as King and Judge

In dealing with 4:8–9, we have suggested that the titles of God in v.8 are roughly parallel to those in v.9, i.e. 'he who lives for ever and ever' parallels 'he who was, and is and is to come', while 'he who sits on the throne' echoes 'Lord God Almighty'. God is also described as 'he who sits on the throne' in 5:13; 6:16; 7:10,15, while the throne is mentioned throughout the book (*e.g.* in 4:5; 8:3; 12:5; 19:5; 21:5; 22:3). Obviously, then, the notion of God reigning from his throne as king is a prominent one in the Apocalypse. While the descriptions of the throne and its occupant in ch.4 are couched in the language of Ezek. 1:26–28 and Is. 6:1–5, the theme of God's kingship runs throughout the Old Testament. Especially instructive is Ps. 29:10 where God is depicted as sitting enthroned over the flood as king for ever. Likewise in the Apocalypse: above all worldly calamities and upheavals, in the midst of pain and persecution, God still sits on his throne in full control.

However, though God is in principle the King of the universe, his eschatological kingdom on earth was inaugurated only at Christ's first coming. This is probably the import of 12:10.[29] Furthermore, at the end of history, the reign of God on earth will be completely realised and operative for ever (Rev. 11:15). At that juncture, as the praise of the twenty-four elders shows (11:17), God will have taken his great power and begun to reign.[30] It is interesting to note in this connection that God is now addressed as '(he) who is and who was' (with 'who is to come' missing, as in 16:5). In other words, whereas hitherto the realisation of God's full power lay still in the future, 'now futurity is caught up in the eternal present'.[31]

God's reign is inseparable from his role as judge. Thus right after the mention of God's reign in 11:17, the elders praise him for exercising his prerogatives as judge (11:18). Similarly, while addressing God as 'King of the ages', Christians extol God for revealing his judgments or righteous acts (*dikaiōmata,* 15:3–4). Conversely, after praising God for judging the prostitute Babylon in 19:1–4, a great multitude praises him saying, 'Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns' (19:6).

As in the case of God's kingship, the same tension exists between God's status as judge 'in principle' and as judge in 'ultimate realisation'. Thus in 6:10 we read of the souls of martyrs asking God in perplexity 'how long . . . until you judge (*krineis*) the inhabitants of the earth and avenge (*ekdikeis*) our blood?' Here they are not doubting God's prerogative and power to judge. Rather, it is his delay in exerting his prerogatives that bewilder them.[32]

Furthermore their question and implicit petition stems from sound theology: they understand God to be 'sovereign lord (*ho despotēs*), holy and true'. The word *despotēs* is used for the master of slaves and emphasises absolute ownership and uncontrolled power. It is a term that the Zealots refused to apply to the Roman emperor, preferring torture and death instead.[33] God is further seen as holy (*hagios*) and true (*alēthinos*), the former in full accord with the attribution of the trisagion. Other passages that deal with the judgment of God see it instead as a *fait accompli.* Thus in 11:18, the time for ultimate judgment has come; in 15:4 God's judgments have been revealed, and are seen as just and true (similarly in 16:5–6,7; 19:1). Now 11:18 tells us that this final retribution and judgment of the dead has two aspects: (1) positively, rewarding the servants/prophets of God (10:7), the saints, and whoever holds God in reverence, (2) negatively, punishing those who sin and wreak havoc on the earth. Rev. 19:1 gives an ultimate example of the latter, viz. the great prostitute Babylon which corrupted the earth with her fornication (*i.e.* idolatry) and shed the blood of God's servants. Again, in God's actual judgment upon the wicked, he is cast as the holy one (*ho hosios,* 15:4; 16:5).

To the first readers of the Apocalypse and to myriads of Christians throughout the ages, perhaps nothing is more tantalising and agonising than to find evil men and women who prosper and wreak havoc in the lives of the godly. The cry of the martyrs in 6:9 is so often also our cry. We do well to remember that God is still king and judge and he will be manifestly so at the consummation of the ages.

F. God as the Guarantor of Salvation (7:10; 19:1)

In 7:9–10, we read of a great multitude shouting 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the lamb'. In 19:1 John hears what sounds like the roar of a great multitude shouting, 'Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God'.[34] The presupposition is that human beings owe their salvation to God from start to finish. But what exactly does the word 'salvation' (*sōtēria*) connote in these two instances? As a clue, we may note that 7:9 describes the multitude as clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands. Verse 14 further explains that they have come out of the great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. The conjoining of cleansing by Christ's blood and emergence from the tribulation is an unusual one. This probably means that these people have persevered in their faith and purity in spite of the tribulation and thus are victorious over the forces of evil. This understanding of 'salvation' is supported by the mention of palm branches, for the latter is a symbol of victory.[35] Likewise, in 19:1, where once again 'salvation' is seen to belong to God, the verse goes on to describe God's judgment and vindication of his servants by avenging their persecutors. Thus 'salvation' involves the notion of victory[36] — emerging through trials with undaunted faith in the case of 7:9–10 and punishing evildoers in the case of 19:1–2. In both cases, it is God who guarantees victory. When circumstances look grim for the Christian, the Christian must remember that ultimately he is not fighting a losing battle if he is on God's side.

G. Christ as the Bridegroom (19:7–8) and Coming One (22:17,20)

In 19:7, speaking in proleptic fashion, a great multitude announce that 'the wedding of the Lamb has come'.[37] According to Jewish marriage customs, a man and a woman are first betrothed to each other for a period of about a year. After this, the bridegroom takes the bride (his espoused wife) into his home and the marriage is consummated after an elaborate ceremony. In Pauline terms, between Christ's two comings the church is Christ's espoused bride (2 Cor. 11:2–3; Eph. 5:25–27,32). The Apocalypse uses the same imagery, and both in the announcement here, as well as in the vision of 21:9ff., the consummation of the relationship between Christ and his people is seen. In 19:8, the perfection of the church is described under the symbolism of bright and pure linen, referring to the righteous deeds of the saints. Yet salvation by merit is ruled out here, for it was 'granted her' to be so clothed.

In visions of the seer, the denouement and consummation have materialised. Yet on the plane of history, they still lie in the future. The Bridegroom still tarries. Yet he repeats that he is coming soon (22:7,12,20). It is therefore natural that John ends his book with his ardent prayer, 'Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.' Since in v.20 this prayer follows right after Christ's statement, it is highly likely that a parallel situation obtains in vv.16 and 17. If so, the first two instances of 'come' are also prayers directed to Christ, pleading for his speedy return. This interpretation is perhaps supported by the use of the word 'bride': the bride says 'come' to the bridegroom. Thus understood, it is strange that the Holy Spirit joins the bride in uttering this prayer. Perhaps Rom. 8:26–7 furnishes the answer. The Holy Spirit helps the church in her prayer for Christ's return. As for the clause 'he who hears', the author probably has in mind individual Christians in congregations which assemble to hear the whole book read (see v.18) and is urging each to pray earnestly for Christ's return. This surely is a much needed reminder to Christians as the Bridegroom tarries while centuries pass by. A vision of the church as the bride clothed in bright and pure linen should spur us on to lead holy and upright lives.

H. God the Father and the Lamb as Worthy Recipients of Worship

We have seen how the prayers in the Apocalypse are rich in their understanding of God. It is no wonder then that praises are offered to him in the form of doxologies, acclamation, attributions, hallelujahs and thanksgiving. Here we shall discuss briefly the fact that the 'Lamb' receives equal treament with God the Father, and is no less the object of worship in the prayers of his people.

In the acclamation of 4:11, God is said to be worthy 'to receive glory and honour and power' by virtue of his prerogatives as Creator. It is therefore very significant that in 5:12 a parallel acclamation is given to the Lamb who was slain. In fact he is deemed worthy not only to receive glory, honour and power, but also wealth, wisdom, strength and praise as well. Likewise in 4:9 it is said that the four living creatures give glory, honour and thanks to the one who sits on the throne, while in the doxology of 1:5b–6, the author of the Apocalypse ascribes glory and power to Jesus. Since the Lamb is deemed equally worthy of praise, he is in fact jointly addressed with God the Father in

5:13 and ascribed praise and honour and glory and power. Similarly, in 7:10: salvation belongs both to God who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb; in 14:1, the 144,000 have on their foreheads the name of the Lamb and his Father. This coupling is also seen in 11:15; 14:4; 20:6; 21:22; 22:1. Elsewhere, in the attitude of the twenty-four elders, the Lamb is put on a par with the Father: they fall down and worship both (4:11; 5:9,14).

This worship of Christ alongside God the Father is highly significant in the book of Revelation, because we are told in both 19:10 and 22:8–9 that when the seer attempted to fall down at the feet of the angel in worship, the angel prohibited him from doing so, declaring himself to be his fellow servant and urging him to worship God instead. Therefore the worship of Jesus Christ here has 'the effect of placing Jesus on the divine side of the line which monotheism must draw between God and creatures'.[38] Yet monotheism is safeguarded in the Apocalypse in that a singular verb (11:15) and a singular pronoun (22:3f.) are used to speak of the Persons together.

In 15:4, those who have conquered the beast confidently assert that, because of the revelation of God's judgments, 'all nations will come and worship' him. Some commentators have taken this to mean that ultimately all will come to acknowledge God's sovereignty and be saved. However, this interpretation surely contradicts the teaching of Rev. 21:8 and elsewhere. Moreover, such an interpretation reads too much into the text. Doubtless if the words 'all' and 'worship' be given their full import, this universal worship may obtain in the time of the millennium (given the pre-millenialist position). But this interpretation is not necessary: 'all nations' may simply imply 'believers from all nations', and 'worship' may mean 'submission' and 'acknowledgement' without necessarily involving an actual conversion of the heart.[39] Perhaps even this is rather pedantic: poetry will be much poorer if we rule out hyperbole and balance ('all nations' clearly balancing 'king of the nations').

IV. PARTICIPANTS OF PRAYER

Even though in the prayers of the Apocalypse (and in the present paper as well), the object of prayer (the Father and the Lamb) looms large, this does not mean that we cannot learn about the subject (participants) of the prayers, and learn *from* them as well. Here we shall briefly deal with their identity, modes of speech, postures and attitudes.

A. Identity of the Participants

Of the twenty-one recorded prayers, four come from people in this world: two by the author (1:5b–6; 22:20), one by the Spirit and the church and one from the listener of the book (22:17). All the others are either by supra-mundane beings or by people who have been translated after death into heaven: two by the four living creatures (4:8; 5:14); two by the twenty-four elders (4:11; 11:17–18); two by the two groups jointly (5:9; 19:4); two by myriads of angels around the throne (5:12; 7:12); one by all creatures in the universe (5:13); one by souls of martyred saints (6:10); one by the angel of water (16:5–6); one by the altar (16:7); one by those who had conquered the

beast (15:3–4); four by great multitudes of people or beings in heaven (7:10; 19:1–2,3,6–8).

Although the identity of the recipient(s) of prayer is clear in the Apocalypse, that of the participants cannot always be discerned with certainty. Space prohibits a full discussion. We shall only pick out for comment the four creatures, the twenty-four elders and the great multitudes.

First of all, the imagery of the four living creatures comes from the cherubim of Ezek. 1 but they also suggest the seraphim of Is. 6:2–3. Thus they probably represent an exalted order of angelic beings 'who as the immediate guardians of the throne lead the heavenly hosts in worship and adoration of God.'[40]

The twenty–four elders are most likely an angelic order, a heavenly couterpart to the twenty–four priestly and twenty–four levitical orders (1 Chr. 24:4; 25:9–13) on earth. Evidence for this lies in the fact that (1) they refer to Christians ransomed by Christ in the third person (5:9), (2) parallels in 3 Enoch xviii describe how each rank of angels shows respect for its superiors by removing the crown of glory on their heads and falling on their faces.[41]

As for the great multitudes of 19:1–2, it is most likely that they are the same as the great multitude of 7:10 since both multitudes ascribe salvation (or victory) to God, and no other group does so.[42] It is also likely that the 144,000 appearing on Mt. Zion (14:1–5) are the same people, since (1) the 144,000 with the name of God and of the Lamb on their foreheads certainly recalls the 144,000 of 7:1–8 sealed on their foreheads; (2) the description of the 144,000 in ch.14 clearly indicates that they are Christians (they 'follow the Lamb', 'were purchased . . . and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb', etc.); and so (3) the 144,000 of 7:1–8 are Christians as well. Therefore, (4) the 144,000 of 7:1–8 heard to be sealed from the twelve tribes of Israel are in actual fact seen as the innumerable multitude from every nation, indicating that the number of the 144,000 is merely symbolic of completeness ($12 \times 12 \times 10^3$) while the twelve tribes of Israel symbolise the people of God in their totality. This situation in ch.7 parallels the one in ch.5 where the one described as the Lion of Judah was actually seen as the Lamb. It follows then that (5) the 144,000 of 14:1–5 is the same group as that in 7:10. Moreover it is likely that those who had conquered the beast, its image and the number of its name (15:3–4) are the same people as the crowd who came out from the tribulation in 7:10. Thus understood, the same multitude is in view in 7:1–8, 9–17; 14:1–5; 15:3–4 and ch.19, with different aspects singled out for description in each case.[43]

B. Mode of Speech and Posture in Prayer

The prayers in the Apocalypse are variously described as speech and song (*hōdē*, 5:9; 14:30 15:3). As speech, the prayers are often cried out loud (5:12; 6:10; 7:10; 16:7; 19:1,3) and sometimes the voice resembles the sound of many waters and thunder peals (14:2; 19:6). When described as song, the prayers are said to be a new song (5:9; 14:3) or the song of Moses and the Lamb (15:3). The epithet 'new song' (*hōdē kainē*) likely conveys the idea of redemption as Old Testament references to the 'new song' often do (Ps. 40:2–3; 96:1–2; 98:1; 144:9–10; Is. 42:10,13). Similarly, the 'Song of Moses' reminds one of the place of the exodus in the old covenant (Exod. 15:1),

while the addition of 'the Lamb' suggests that the new exodus of the new covenant is being hymned. As 'song', prayers to God are said to be accompanied by the harp in all three cases. In a book which breathes of persecution and suffering, it is remarkable that participants of prayer burst out in joyful song. Even though the picture is one of heavenly worship, it serves as an invitation to the church on earth to sing in spite of suffering (cf. Acts 16:25).

In two places of the Apocalypse, the word *proseuchai* is used for prayers and identified or associated with incense (5:8; 8:3). The word *proseuchai* denotes prayers comprehensively (as opposed to *deēsis* which more commonly refers to petitionary prayer).[44] The link between prayers of the saints and incense is already drawn in Ps. 141:2, and its significance in the Apocalyspe will be discussed later.

As for the posture of those involved in prayer, the heavenly participants are almost invariably described as falling down before the throne of God or the Lamb in worship (4:10; 5:8,14: 7:11; 11:16; 19:4). The twenty–four elders also cast their golden crowns before the throne (4:10). On the other hand, the great multitude of the redeemed is depicted as standing before the throne and the Lamb (7:9) or standing beside the sea of glass (15:2). It has been suggested that to 'stand before' someone is to serve as his appointed servant (Lk. 1:19),[45] but it is also likely from the contexts (holding palm branches in 7:9, and singing the song of the Lamb in 15:2) that 'to stand' signifies victory and safety from peril. By contrast, in 6:9 the souls of the martyrs are said to be 'under the altar'. Several interpretations have been offered for this strange location. In one, it is suggested that the imagery comes from Old Testament ritual where the blood of sacrificial animals was poured out at the base of the altar of burnt offering (Lev. 4:7; Exod. 29:10), and the soul or life of all flesh was regarded as present in the blood. Thus the martyrdom of the believers is here seen as a sacrifice upon the heavenly altar. Alternatively, explanation is sought from parallels in rabbinic writings where the souls of the righteous are said to be preserved under the throne of glory, or that they rest under the heavenly altar or are first offered upon the heavenly altar.[46] In view of the reference to the blood (implying violent death) of the martyrs, perhaps the first explanation is preferable.

C. Attitudes of the Participants

We earlier noted how falling down and worshipping God characterises the heavenly hosts, and that in the Apocalypse worship is to be rendered only to God the Father and the Lamb. The verb 'to worship' (*proskyneō*) was in early use in reference to honouring deity by stooping down in prostration. In any case, deep reverence is the essence. Nor is this expected of angels only. Mankind, too, should (and will) worship God and not worship the beast (11:1; 14:7; 15:4). Even in the cry of the martyred saints (6:9), while the tone sounds impatient, God was still revered as Sovereign Lord, holy and true. Here, as well as the 'come' of ch.22, expectancy also characterises the prayers.

While the attitudes of all the participants of prayers towards God was praiseworthy and exemplary, can the same be said of their attitude toward the wicked and the persecutors of the church? Can we justify the prayer for

revenge (6:10) and the jubilation over the destruction of 'Babylon' (19:1–2)? Does not 16:6 sound perilously blood-thirsty? It is well to remember that in a Hebrew lawcourt, a plaintiff has to plead his own cause and the judge must decide whether he was in the right or in the wrong, so that

> . . . any failure of the judge to vindicate the plaintiff was tantamount to a decision in favour of the defendant. The martyrs have been condemned in a human court of law and that decision stands against them unless it is reversed in a higher court. The point of issue is not the personal relations of the martyrs with their accusers, but the validity of their faith.[47]

We may also note that the vindication of the martyrs is in essence the vindication of God's justice, since they are in the right and died for God's cause. The same thing may be said of the jubilant response at the fall of 'Babylon'.

V. THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER IN THE APOCALYPSE

Prayer is extremely important in the book of Revelation. First of all, prayers occur at important junctures of the story. Secondly, prayers are described as rising before God and being answered. Finally, prayers are depicted as divinely assisted.

A. Prayer and the Structure of the Apocalypse

Prayer occurs in the prologue (1:5b–6) and in the epilogue (22:17,20). In the first vision and in the letters to the seven churches of Asia, prayers are not recorded. But beginning with ch.4, they are mentioned at important junctures of the visions. Thus the prayers of adoration in chapters 4–5 are actually a prelude to the opening of the seals. Moreover, the twenty-four elders are explicitly described as holding bowls full of incense, *i.e.* the prayers of the saints, as they sing of the worthiness of the Lamb to take the scroll and open its seals. In the midst of the series of seals (at the opening of the fifth seal) a prayer of the martyred saints is heard (6:9–10). In the midst of the interlude between the sixth and seventh seals, we hear the great multitude and all the angels singing God's praise. Then at the opening of the seventh seal and before the blowing of the trumpets, we read that, concomitant with the silence in heaven, incense was offered before God together with the prayers of the saints. Subsequently the censers were filled with fire from the altar and thrown onto earth. Thunder, rumblings, lightning, earthquake (signs of God's presence) ensue. Likewise at the blowing of the seventh trumpet, we hear of the twenty-four elders praising God for entering into his reign and bringing final judgment. This is again followed by thunder and lightning, etc., with the appearance of the ark in heaven. Then in the vignette of the 144,000 at Mount Zion, after mention of the mark of the 'beast', we hear them singing a new song (14:1–5). Again, before the seven bowls of plagues are poured out, the conquerors of the beast sing to God the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb (15:3–4). This is followed by the appearance of the temple in heaven and the outpouring of God's wrath. Then as the third bowl of God's wrath is poured out, both the angel in charge of the waters and the altar itself

praise God for his righteous judgment (16:5–7). Finally, after the destruction of 'Babylon' (associated with the seventh bowl) and before the war of Armageddon, the Hallelujahs are sung (19:1–4,6–8).

From this survey, it is readily seen that prayers are featured both at the beginning and at the end of the three series of the seals, the trumpets and the bowls, and sometimes in the midst of the series, or in interludes. The relationship of the three series has long been a bone of contention amongst interpreters of the Apocalypse. The position of the present writer is that there is partial overlap in the actualisation of the three series in history, with each series culminating in the climactic events of Christ's return.[48] But even if such a scheme be rejected, it remains true that prayer occurs at important junctures of the Apocalypse. Indeed, prayer is integral to the plan of the book, as we shall see, since the prayers of the saints are instrumental in bringing on certain events.

B. The Answering of Prayer

As pointed out above, the prayer of the saints is twice associated with the burning of incense (5:9; 8:3). In the latter case, the smoke of the incense rises before God. In consequence, the angel fills the censer (*libanōtos*) with fire from the altar and throws it on earth. The ensuing events (thunder, voices, lightning, earthquake, and the trumpet judgments are therefore cast as the answer to prayer. Moreover, it is quite likely that the golden bowls full of the wrath of God in 15:7 recall the golden bowls full of incense of 5:8.[49] If so, the pouring out of God's wrath likewise comes as an answer to prayer.[50]

The case of the prayer of the martyrs is even clearer. A definite answer is given to their plea for vindication: they are each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer until the number of martyrs is complete. Here, in line with the symbolism in 19:8, the 'white robe' probably symbolises recognition of the martyrs' righteousness and blessedness and not the resurrection body.[51] As for the completion of the number of martyrs, this surely means that from John's perspective death by martyrdom is still in store for many Christians[52] before the gospel is preached to the whole world (Mk. 13:10), evil is completely overthrown (2 Thess. 1:6–10; Rev. 19–22) and the kingdom of God is fully realised (Rev. 11:15). Not only is the prayer of the martyred saints attended to immediately but it is answered in full when the time comes. Thus in perfect poetic justice, those who shed the blood of saints and prophets are 'given blood to drink' and the punishment is declared to be what they deserve (*axioi eisin* — they are 'worthy') in 16:6. Thus God judges the 'great prostitute' and avenges (*ekrinen kai exedikēsen*) the blood of his servants (19:2), the same two actions that the martyrs under the altar longed to see in 6:10 and for which prayers were doubtless offered at heaven's golden altar of incense in 8:3. No wonder the altar (whether of sacrifice or of incense) cries out to God, 'True and just are your judgments' (16:7).

C. Divine Enablement of Prayer

Contrary to 5:8 where incense is equated with the prayers of the saints, in 8:3–4 the two seem to be distinct from each other: much incense is given to the angel to mingle with the prayers, and the smoke of the incense rises with the prayers of the saints. It is true that some commentators have regarded the

expression 'with the prayers of the saints' (*tais proseuchais tōn hagiōn*) as a dative of reference, clarifying the nature of the incense.[53] But this is not the most natural understanding of the verses. If the incense is in this instance distinct from the prayers, we may conceivably think of it as divine assistance to prayer (much of it was given to the angel offering the prayers). Perhaps it may not be far-fetched to think of it as intercession by Christ (Rom. 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24) or by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:26) on Christians' behalf. In this connection, we may recall that Rev. 22:17 has the Spirit and the Bride say 'Come', possibly meaning that the Holy Spirit assists the church in her prayer for Christ's return. In a similar vein, we read that the overcomers of the beast (15:2) hold in their hands 'harps of God' (RSV). Whether they are 'harps for God's service' or 'harps given them by God' (NIV), they suggest that praise to God (sung to the accompaniment of harps) is no mere human achievement.

The same picture is given in 19:5. A voice comes from the throne, urging God's servants to praise him. Though unspecified, the owner of this voice is probably a heavenly being, perhaps one of the four living creatures. In any case this call to worship has divine approval (the voice is represented as coming from the throne) and draws forth a resounding Hallelujah like the sound of many waters and thunder peals.

Thus in a veiled way, the author reminds his readers that God not only answers their prayers but enables them to pray as well. This is certainly encouraging to Christians facing severe hardship.

VI. THE RELEVANCE OF PRAYER IN THE APOCAPLYPSE

We have already cited the internal evidence of the book to demonstrate that a note of suffering pervades the entire book. It is worth pausing to mention the external evidence for the setting of the book before contemplating just how the prayers of the book are relevant to the first readers in their own historical context.

According to Irenaeus, the book of Revelation was written by the apostle John near the end of Domitian's reign (A.D. 81–96). This date was also accepted by Victorinus, Eusebius and Jerome. Although some scholars prefer the reign of Nero for the provenance of the book, here we shall abide by the external evidence given by the Church Fathers.[54]

During the reign of Domitian, emperor worship had progressed to such an extent that failure to honour the emperor as a god became, at least in some circles, a punishable political offence. It was therefore not surprising that Christians were torn in their loyalties between Christ and Caesar, and were persecuted on religious grounds.[55] The external evidence for such persecution is certainly consistent with the internal evidence of the book itself.

First of all, the titles by which God is addressed are often titles the Caesars gave themselves. For instance, 'our LORD and God (*ho kyrios kai ho theos hēmōn*)' in 4:11 is unusual in Greek (since the customary title for God in the Bible is simply *kyrios ho theos* as in 11:17; 15:3; 16:7) but is an exact equivalent of the Latin expression (*Dominus et Deus Noster*) by which Domitian wished to be called. Therefore the mode of the address here is an implicit denial of the claims of Caesar as well as an affirmation of loyalty to

God the Creator.[56] Similarly, the titles 'Saviour' and 'Sovereign Lord' were claimed by the Roman Caesars.[57] In ascribing salvation to God and addressing him as Sovereign Lord, the saints and martyrs thereby pledge their allegiance to God, and not to Caesar.[58]

Similarly, the hymns and acclamations addressed to God (especially in the throne vision of chs. 4–5) bear a striking resemblance to the ceremonial of the imperial court and cult. Thus 'you are worthy' was used to greet the emperor in public functions.[59] In ascribing 'worthiness' to God, the heavenly celebrants are reminding John and his readers that ultimately only God is worthy of receiving loyalty and allegiance, and only he is worth dying for.

In contrast, the Antichrist who receives power from Satan is merely the beast, and the citadel of pagan opposition to God's cause is Babylon doomed to be destroyed. Countless proposals have been offered for the identification of the beast and of Babylon. The futurist position claims that the beast stands for the final and intensified expression of antichristian world power and Babylon symbolises the seat of its power. There is certainly merit in this interpretation. But there is truth in the preterist position too: for the first century readers of the Apocalypse, it is scarcely to be doubted that the beast was taken to epitomise the Roman empire as the persecutor of the church, and Rome was Babylon *par excellence*. This is especially clear in Rev. 17:9 where the woman (the prostitute Babylon) is said to be seated on seven mountains. This description fits Rome's geography perfectly. In this connection, the discovery of a brass coin (*sesterce*) from A.D. 71 bears pictorial confirmation: the emperor Vespasian is on the obverse, and the goddess Rome in military garb on seven hills on the reverse, accompanied by a she-wolf.[60] As R. Beauvery points out, the Latin word for she-wolf (*lupa*) could designate a dissolute woman. If so, describing Rome as a prostitute is singularly appropriate in Rev. 17–18, especially as Roman morals were horrifyingly low,[61] and idolatry (spiritual harlotry) was rampant in the form of pagan religions, cults and emperor worship.

Various connections between the prayers in the Apocalypse and the ecclesiastical practices of the first century can also be traced. On the one hand, some scholars claim that John borrowed from liturgical sources in composing his work, or even derived the structure of his work from a Christian paschal liturgy.[62] On the other hand, some argue that the hymns in the Apocalypse were written by the same author who composed the rest of the work and reject the view that a liturgical structure is visible in the book.[63] While the former line of approach (especially the reconstruction of a complete liturgy) may be criticised for being too subjective, the latter is perhaps unduly sceptical. The truth probably lies between the two. For one thing, the prevalence of Old Testament expressions in the prayers raises the possibility of the author incorporating materials from current Christian worship as well. There is Old Testament and Jewish precedent for seeing the cultus on earth as a reflection of that in heaven. This is especially relevant since John beheld visions on the Lord's day while alone in exile on the Island of Patmos: while praises and supplication were raised to God by the congregations in Asia Minor, John was caught up into the worship of heaven.[64] Moreover, since doxologies play an important part in Christian worship (as seen in the *Didache*, the addition to the Lord's prayer in Mt. 6:13 and in epistolary endings), and since the 'Come' of Rev. 22:20 echoes the

'*marana tha*' used in eucharistic celebrations (cf. 1 Cor. 11:26; 16:22), it is highly likely that other forms of prayer (and even the contents as well) from first century worship services feature in this book.

VII. CONCLUSION

Recently, upon being told that I was writing an article on prayer in the book of Revelation, a friend of mine replied in astonishment, 'Sure, that book contains songs of praise. But I never knew prayers were there as well!' My friend's remark probably stems from the popular notion that 'prayer' is somehow restricted to 'petition'. But prayer includes doxology, acclamation of worthiness, attribution of praiseworthy qualities and thanksgiving as well.

In line with inadequate conceptions of prayer is the poverty of theology reflected in much of contemporary prayer. God is sometimes visualised as a good old man, smiling and nodding benignly at his creatures. The book of Revelation, however, tells us that the One to whom we pray is the Lord God Almighty, self-existent and far removed from human frailty and sin. He is the Creator of all things, the Redeemer, the Sovereign Controller of history, King, Judge, Guarantor of man's salvation and the coming Bridegroom. As such, God is worthy of worship not only from man but from every creature as well. He may be prayed to in speech or in song. Whatever our posture, our attitude should be one of reverence and expectancy. In situations where Christians are persecuted, prayer for the vindication of God's justice is proper.

The book of Revelation also tells us that prayer is important in God's eyes. It comes to the attention of God and is instrumental in unleashing God's judgment upon the world and in ushering in his final kingdom. Though the answer sometimes tarries, it is sure to come. Moreover, in one type of imagery after another, the Apocalypse reminds us that the God who answers prayer is also the God who assists us in prayer.

The prayers in the book of Revelation are highly relevant to the political situation and the church life of the late first century. As such, they challenge us to be relevant Christians in our times. May we be worthy heirs of this Christian heritage, whether we live under godless totalitarian regimes as they did, or enjoy freedom in democratic (yet often secular and hedonistic) societies. In both contexts, Christians may face overt persecution or subtle pressures to conform and worship people or things instead of God. Thus in democratic countries, faithful Christians may be ridiculed and ostracised, whereas in countries like mainland China and Russia, religious activities unsupervised by state officials and outside designated churches (plus 'meeting-points' in the case of China) are strictly prohibited and Christians involved in them are liable to be prosecuted. The prayers in the Apocalypse urge us to acknowledge God's sovereignty above all else and to bear witness to Christ irrespective of our circumstances. Whatever the details of our understanding of eschatology, especially on disputed passages such as ch.20, let us unite with the seer in saying to the church's Bridegroom, 'Come, Lord Jesus'.

8

A Biblical Theology of Prayer

EDMUND P. CLOWNEY

'Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name . . .' From around the globe the heavenly Father is addressed in the languages of earth. The prayer that Jesus taught begins where prayer must begin — with the true and living God. The Bible is God's Word; it is his story of his work in bringing rebellious men and women back to himself. It tells, not of man's seeking a lost God, but of God's seeking lost men. The Bible does not present an art of prayer; it presents the God of prayer, the God who calls before we answer and answers before we call (Isa. 65:24). In the biblical history, prayer is not introduced as a separate spiritual discipline: it rises as man's answer to God's address. God speaks to Adam; Adam speaks to God. In the Book of Genesis we find conversations between God and Abraham. Indeed, Abraham bargains with God, begging God's pardon for his insistence, but respectfully pleading his cause (Gen. 18). The richness of later revelation about prayer never does prejudice to this simple reality: prayer is personal address to a personal God: 'Our Father, which art in heaven. . . .'

Christian devotion has been tinged at times with forms of mysticism that reverse the biblical pattern. In the place of the triune God of Scripture, revealed in Jesus Christ, such mysticism substitutes an impersonal Absolute, an abyss of non-being into which the devotee is plunged and absorbed. Prayer as personal intercourse with God is then merely tolerated — for those of limited spiritual competence. Not prayer, but *samadhi* is sought: a consciousness transformed by absorption. The adept does not adore the personal God, he becomes the impersonal All.[1] The techniques that prepare for such an experience feature repetitive sounds, sights, or actions. Analytical thought is mesmerised to favour intuitive awareness, a relaxed state in which one's consciousness of individual identity is suspended.[2]

Mysticism seeks to alter the mental state of the mystic. Prayer seeks communion with God. To be sure, the praying Christian is transformed. Prayer plunges into agony and soars in ecstasy, but it does not seek the heights or depths of experience. It seeks the Lord. The delight found in his presence is offered to his praise.

I. PRAYER ADDRESSES THE PERSONAL GOD

A. God's glory is personally revealed

Prayer, like all worship, is always a response to God's revelation of himself

and his will. To call upon God's name one must first know his name; it is God who takes the initiative by making his name known. God reveals himself by his deeds; he also makes his name known directly by his words. In both, God is revealed as personal. In his words he both promises and proclaims his deeds. The wonder of both his words and his deeds evokes the response of adoration.

1. In his works

God reveals his power and wisdom in the created universe. 'The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands' (Ps. 19:1). Creation itself forms part of God's address to man. Psalm 147 beautifully joins the word of God that spreads the snow with the word that reveals his laws and decrees to Israel. Yet the God who speaks to his people is exalted above his creation, the work of his hands (Ps. 57:5). The thunder of God's power in creation affects the response of prayer in a double way. First, because God has all power, he is able to act in answering prayer. The thunderstorm of God's appearing described in Psalm 18 is his response to the cry of his afflicted servant. Second, the creative power of God shows the awe and reverence with which he is to be addressed and worshipped. God is not submerged in the cosmos, but greater far than all that his word called into being. We may not find a visit to the zoo a devotional experience, but God brought awe to Job with a close-up look at the hippopotamus and the crocodile. Job learned that his complaints had been addressed to a Creator whose power and wisdom surpass all understanding (Job 40,41).

God's royal power appears in his control of history as well as of nature. 'The LORD foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. But the plans of the LORD stand fast forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations' (Ps. 33:10,11).

The prophet Elisha prayed that God would open the eyes of his servant to see the chariots of fire that surrounded the besieging troops of Syria (2 Kgs. 6:17). Those who oppose the purposes of God are always outnumbered and overpowered. The prophet can pray with confidence to God as the Lord of history, and can proceed to capture those sent to take him captive.

The deeds of God that both invite and answer prayer are, above all, his deeds of deliverance and salvation. God hears the cry of enslaved and oppressed Israel, and declares to Moses in the desert that he has come down to deliver them and bring them to himself (Exod. 3:7,9). The exodus deliverance is God's answer to the groans of his chosen people. Yet here, too, God's answer both exceeds and precedes their prayer. Enslaved Israel is far from praying effectively for deliverance: the cry that comes to God is more the groan of affliction than the plea of faith. Moses, embittered by his own abortive attempt to champion the cause of Israel, is far from seeking God's commission to deliver them. Rather, he angers the Lord by his reluctance to accept the charge that God thrusts upon him. God promises deliverance because he would be faithful to his own promises, the promises that he made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exod. 3:6,13,16).

With the patriarchs, too, the initiative was God's. It was the Lord who called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees and promised to bless him and make a great nation from him (Gen. 12:1–3). Abraham does pray for a son, but only after so many years have elapsed that he begins to despair of the fulfilment of God's promise (Gen. 15:2,3). When God renews the same

promise years later, Abraham prays, not for its fulfilment, but its abandonment. He actually laughs at the promise of God (Gen. 17:17). The notion of Sarah's bearing him a son in their sunset years has become ludicrous. Abraham would have God recognise the limitations of the situation and settle for a reasonable solution. Sarah is hopelessly childless, but Hagar, her maid, can and has borne to Abraham a son. Abraham therefore prays, 'Let Ishmael live before you!' God promised too much and should settle for reality! In God's own time the impossible promise is fulfilled; Isaac is born. Sarah, who, like Abraham, had laughed in unbelief, laughs in another way: 'God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me' (Gen. 21:6). The marvel of God's work so far surpasses the expectation, indeed, the imagination of Abraham and Sarah, that only laughter can express the absurdity of divine grace. Isaac, 'Laughter', is a name that memoralises the overwhelming wonder of the saving work of God. Mary, promised a yet more amazing miracle, is reminded by the angel of the assurance given to Sarah: 'No word is too wonderful for God!' (Gen. 18:14; Luke 1:37).[3]

Prayer, in the biblical context, is always response to the God who has made himself known. Further, it is a reverent response. The wonder of God's works in creation and salvation demands adoration: 'It is the LORD!' Prayer is antithetical to magic. God is not to be manipulated nor his power exploited. He cannot be summoned like the genie of Aladdin's lamp. Rather, it is he who does the summoning. Exiled Jacob, fleeing from his brother's wrath, is met by the Lord in a dream; his vow is an awed response to the promise of the God who has spoken to him (Gen. 28:16–22).

2. *In his name*

Worship begins in the godly line of Seth when men 'call upon the name of the LORD' (Gen. 4:26). In the most basic sense, calling on God's name means uttering his name aloud, addressing him by name. God's name, then, has signficance. In the USA, 'handle' has long been a slang term for 'name'. Knowing a person's name gives us a 'handle' in addressing him. For that reason some tribal cultures have kept an individual's 'real' name a secret so that others could not gain the control that knowledge of a name affords. In revealing his name to men, particularly to sinful men, God shows the wonder of his grace. He makes himself addressable, opens the door to prayer, provides a bond that calls to fellowship. In the patriarchal period described in Genesis, God's disclosures of himself are linked with a series of divine names: *'ēl ʿelyôn*, 'God Most High' (14:22); *'ēl rᵒ'î*, 'You are the God who sees me' (16:13); *'ēl šaday*, 'God Almighty' (17:1); *'ēl ʿôlām*, 'the Eternal God' (21:33); *yᵉhōwâ yirch*, 'the Lord will provide' (22:14); *'ēl ᵉlōhê yiśrā'ēl*, 'God, the God of Israel' (33:20); *'ēl bêṯ-'ēl*, 'God of Bethel' (35:7). These names are often associated with places, and with altars set up to worship God in the name that was revealed. This series of names leads to the disclosure of the covenant name, *Yahweh,* when God calls Moses at the burning bush (Exod. 3:14f.).

Taken in context, and sometimes elaborated by qualifying statements (*e.g.* Gen. 14:22), these names present powerful and dramatic witness to the attributes of God, attributes that are decisive for the address of prayer. They

teach us that God is the Creator of heaven and earth; nothing is hid from his sight. He has all power, and can intervene at will in the world of his creation to accomplish his purposes of grace. Although he is eternal, he identifies himself as the God of Israel, forming his own name upon the name of his servant. His name is made the seal of his promises. He not only sees, he 'sees to' the desperate needs of those who trust him. His purpose of salvation is rooted in his own nature: he is the 'I Am' who is self-determined and sovereign in his plan to redeem his people.

As the people of God respond in worship, they 'magnify' the name of the Lord (Ps. 34:4; 69:30): that is, they rejoice in what God's name reveals about his nature and at the same time pray that God will be true to himself. The prayer, 'Hallowed be thy name' marks the very pinnacle of devotion. It asks not merely that God's name might be hallowed on earth in the doing of his will. Far beyond that, the prayer reaches to heaven: it asks that God hallow his own name, that God be God in all the wonder of his being.

3. *In his presence*

Prayer responds to God's revelation of himself by deed and by word. Yet there is a dimension of depth in that revelation. God does not merely speak and act; he is present. Prayer is steeped in the awareness, often an awe-filled awareness, of the presence of God.

The immediacy of God's presence is sometimes symbolised by attending phenomena: the darkness that surrounds him, or the cloud through which his glory shines. God is represented as coming in the cloud and speaking from it. An awesome flame, shining like lightning out of deep darkness, represented the presence of God to Abraham.[4] These symbols of God's immediate presence show the contrasting truths of God's infinite transcendence and his immediate appearing. The heaven of heavens cannot contain him (1 Kgs. 8:27); he fills heaven and earth (Jer. 23:24). For him to regard the heavens and the earth would be to humble himself (Ps. 113:6). Yet this is what he does. 'For this is what the high and lofty One says — he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit . . ." ' (Isa. 57:15). No physical fire can reveal his holiness (Heb. 12:18). Even the wind that splits the rock cannot adequately express his power, yet he can reveal his presence in a whispered word (1 Kgs. 19:11,12).

The personal presence of the Lord is dramatically revealed in the appearance of his Angel. In the Angel God appeared to Abraham; in the Angel he led Israel through the wilderness. The Angel of God's presence bears his name, and is to be feared and obeyed as the Lord (Exod. 23:21), for, indeed, it is God who appears as the Angel. The immediate presence of the Lord is also expressed by the phrase, 'the face of the Lord' (Exod. 33:14,15). Isaiah speaks of the exodus deliverance of Israel by the 'angel of his face' (Isa. 63:9).[5]

The very expressions used to describe God's self-revelation show that the initiative must come from him. Man cannot ascend into heaven to look upon the face of God, nor can he build a temple-tower to bring God down to the box of his religious specifications. This was the sin of the builders of the tower of Babel. Rather than calling upon the name of the Lord, they sought to make for themselves a name, and to build a tower that would establish

communication with God on their terms. The phrase that describes the tower of Babel (the top reaching to heaven) is repeated in a different context when God reveals himself to Jacob at Bethel (Gen. 11:4; 28:12). The stairway of Jacob's dream is set up by God, not by men; it is God who takes the initiative. He descends the stairway to stand beside Jacob in the dream and to repeat the promises that he had made to Abraham.[6] By God's initiative his presence is made known. Jacob marks the spot as Bethel, the 'house of God', exclaiming, 'Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it!' (Gen. 28:16).

When Jacob returns to the land of the promise after his long exile in Haran, God again takes the initiative in revealing his presence (Gen. 32). Jacob fears the encounter with his offended brother Esau, but he is taught to fear rather his encounter with God. The threat comes, not from the encampment of angels that meets him as he enters the land, but from a single antagonist who challenges him: the Angel of the Lord. The desperate wrestling match that follows should be understood as trial by combat: an ordeal in which Jacob prevails even as he is crippled by the touch of the angel. Jacob emerges as the lame victor: he has seen the face of God and has prevailed to receive the blessing (Gen. 32:28,31; Hos. 12:4).[7] The deep mystery of this incident is illumined by its fulfilment in Jesus Christ. The touch of the Angel on Jacob's thigh has reference to his descendants.[8] The stroke of judgment falls upon the Seed of Jacob; it is the Suffering Servant who is smitten of the Lord, but who strives with God and wins.

Jacob's struggle reflects his prayer recorded earlier in the chapter (Gen. 32:9–12). He confesses his own unworthiness, prays for deliverance from Esau, and claims the promise of blessing that God had spoken at Bethel. Jacob's victory is by faith: in his crippled condition he is no match for a human adversary, much less the Angel. Yet he clings with desperation to the Angel, claiming the promised blessing. When the Angel asks Jacob to release him because the dawn is breaking, we are not to understand that the Angel feared the dawn. The danger was to Jacob: the danger of seeing, in the light of the morning, the face of the One who was none other than the Lord. This is clear from Jacob's words after the encounter. He calls the place 'Peniel' ('the face of God') because in the dim light he saw God's face and yet escaped death.

Can Jacob's wrestling with the Angel be made a model for prayer warriors of the new covenant? Certainly not if it is torn from its context in the history of redemption, and therefore from its fulfilment in Jesus Christ. It is Christ who delivers us from the judgment threatened at Peniel. His loud cries and tears have prevailed for us (Heb. 5:7). He has endured the ordeal that accomplished our salvation, the ordeal of Gethsemane and Calvary. God's revelation at Peniel teaches the grace of his plan as he intervenes to bless the heir of the promise. Yet Jacob is not just an actor in a sacred drama. His fierce grip on the angel expresses his desperate faith. In that respect Jacob, like the host of saints surveyed in Hebrews 11, bears witness to us. We have received 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ' (2 Cor. 4:6). That light is the supreme blessing of grace. The prayer of faith lays hold of that gift with a persistence that will not be denied (Lk. 11:8; 18:5).

The Apostle Paul, who laboured in the gospel and suffered agony in persecution (Phil. 1:30), also agonised over the churches he had planted (Col. 2:1–3). He did so, not in fretful anxiety, but in prevailing prayer. Epaphras, in

the company of the apostle, wrestled in prayer for the saints in his home church at Colosse (Col. 4:12).

B. The response of prayer is personal

The personal form of God's self-revelation requires a response that is supremely personal. Prayer is not a magical formula to be repeated, but the personal communication, awed and adoring, of the redeemed creature who stands in the presence of the Saviour God.

1. Prayer by persons in God's image

In prayer the creature addresses the Creator. Prayer therefore requires dependence, but it also requires access, the possibility of communication between the creature and the Creator. The image of God in man provides the ground for both. God created man in his image; clearly man is a creature. He is like God as his image-bearer, but he is not divine. In the creation story of Akkadian mythology the god Kingu is executed for planning rebellion; mankind is fashioned from his blood.[9] In contrast, the biblical account declares that man is created by God from the dust of the ground. Mankind is 'Adam' as formed from '*adamah*, the soil (Gen. 2:7; 5:2). As Paul says, 'The first man is of the earth, earthy' (1 Cor. 15:47). Likeness is not identity. The divine inbreathing that gave life to Adam did not impart deity. The Lord 'forms the spirit of man within him . . .' (Zech. 12:1).[10] In spirit as in body, man is God's creature. It is the tempter who holds out the false promise that Adam and Eve can be as God (Gen. 3:5).

Yet the creation account in Genesis sets man apart as made in God's image (Gen. 1:26,27). Because of that distinction, mankind is given rule over the rest of creation. Adam names the animals, but none is suitable to be a companion for him. Adam, God's image-bearer, is God's representative on earth; Adam and Eve are to serve God as rulers of creation. God's image relates mankind not only to the created world, but also to one another. Human life is precious in God's sight because of the dignity of God's own image (Gen. 9:6). Yet, above all, the divine image relates man to God. Adam, formed in God's image, may be called a son of God (Luke 3:38). Luke's genealogy reminds us that Jesus is the Son of God as the second Adam; in him the image of God marred by sin is restored and renewed. But Jesus is more than mere man; he is God the Son, the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15; 3:10; 2 Cor. 3:18). The image of God that is restored by salvation is the image of the divine Son (Rom. 8:29). The incarnation gives meaning beyond all imagining to man's creation in the image of God. Christ is the very brilliance of the Father's glory, and we are transformed from glory to glory in the same image (2 Cor. 3:18; Heb. 1:3).

Human personality cannot be understood or expressed apart from the fundamental reality of the image of God.[11] Only as God's image-bearer can man have both freedom and purpose without contradiction. Prayer expresses both. In the midst of the created cosmos, man is called to prayer, not only to praise God for his marvellous works, but also to further his will and design in creation. Consider the amazing boldness of the prayer Jesus taught his disciples. They may call God their Father and ask that he hallow his own name; they may seek the accomplishment of his will on earth as in heaven.

God stands in no need of counsellors; he requires no support or encouragement to unfold the mystery of his will. Yet God's grace so draws creatures of dust to his side that they may join with him to seek his sovereign purposes. Union with Christ enables us to seek with him the fulfilment of his Father's will.

On the other hand, the image of God puts the seal of God's possession upon those whom he has made. When the enemies of Jesus confronted him with a catch question about paying taxes to Caesar, Jesus asked to see a denarius, a Roman coin. The image and inscription on the coin were Caesar's. Jesus said, 'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's' (Mt. 22:21). That answer cut through the trap that was laid for him, but it did much more. The coin was Caesar's, for it bore his image. We are God's for we bear his image. God's image in us is also his claim on us. Prayer gives to God what is his. The boldness of the Lord's prayer is matched by its humility, its simple dependence on the heavenly Father. Nothing magnifies the grace of God more than the realisation of the privilege that grace gives. The more the image of God is restored in us the more personal becomes our relation to him, and the deeper our devotion.

2. *Prayer by the whole person*

Because God's image makes man to be man, prayer involves a response that has no parallel in human experience. Personal relations on the human level are necessarily partial. A man relates to his wife in a way that differs from his relating to a business partner or to a chance acquaintance. We sustain roles that can express only partially our own personhood. In relation to God, however, we are 'naked and pinned down' (Heb. 4:13). Our masks are gone, pretence is useless: the relationship is not partial, but total. All that we are stands related to our Maker and Redeemer.

Worship is overwhelmed by the *presence* of God's being and glory. When the seraphim cry 'Holy, holy, holy' in God's temple, every utterance springs from a fresh perception of the glory of the Lord sweeping over them like the waves of the sea. But the redeemed taste a greater glory. Our awareness of God our Creator is inexpressibly heightened by our sense of the presence of God our Saviour. John Newton, once a 'slave of slaves' and of sin, knew that wonder: 'Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. . . .' To the boundless wisdom and power of God there is added the depth of his mercy and the height of his love (Ps. 103:11; Eph. 3:18–19). David tasted it; he added to his psalm of deliverance from Saul the opening exclamation, 'I love you, O LORD, my strength' (Ps. 18:1; cf. 2 Sam. 22:2). David's experience has been deepened for us by the coming of the Lord, but his cry is still ours.

In the presence of the Lord prayer spirals from faith to faith, from blessing to blessing. The more aware we become of the One to whom we pray, the more we are drawn to seek his face; the more we seek his face, the more aware we become of the inexhaustible riches of his grace (2 Cor. 3:18).

C. The response of prayer is effective

The pattern of prayer that is assumed and described in the Bible is grounded in God's own nature, his saving work and word, his gracious presence. This biblical theology of prayer gives answer to objections that are often raised

against the practice of prayer. The assumptions of rationalism still underlie popular liberal thought. The physical universe is conceived as a machine governed by the laws of causality. It grinds on inexorably; it would be foolish to think that so insubstantial an entity as a whispered prayer could affect its course. Strangely, this view of nature is often supported by an appeal to God's laws. A liberal preacher, rejecting the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ, defends his unbelief eloquently:

> Brought up as we have been in an atmosphere charged with scientific methods and presuppositions, it is hard for us to share the physical interpretation of the event. The God we know is not a God who reverses his laws and we find it difficult to imagine that he who decreed that dust is the beginning and end of man's material existence should in this instance reverse that declaration.[12]

No doubt the deistic conception of God's relation to creation has long outlived the Newtonian physics with which it was so closely linked. No doubt, too, equally unbiblical views could be associated with more recent physical models.[13] Our views of the cosmos tend to bear suspicious similarity to the cultural context in which they are constructed.[14] The profound simplicity of biblical teaching has no difficulty with God's ability to answer prayer. Through the prophets the Lord calls upon men and women to call upon him: he will show them great and wonderful things that they could not imagine (Jer. 33:3). By the prayers of his prophets God restores the dead to life: nothing is impossible for God. The real difficulty is not with the nature of prayer; it is with the nature of God. Given the God of the Bible, answers to prayer are no problem.

The strength of the biblical answer to that difficulty seems to create another. If God is Lord and Sovereign, if he takes the initiative, if he accomplishes his will in heaven and in earth, *why* pray? Will not God carry out his purposes without our requesting that he do so? Since we do not know how God will accomplish his plan, would it not be better to leave everything in his hands? Is not prayer presumptuous meddling, offering God unnecessary advice? If the first difficulty misses God's power, the second misses his goodness. The plan that God will accomplish is a plan that includes the dedicated participation of his creatures. For this purpose he has made man in his image and is restoring him in the image of his Son. As Jesus prays for those the Father has given him, he is fulfilling the will of his Father (John 17). Our prayers, too, are part of the great sweep of God's plan for his people. God's sovereignty does not rob history of significance; to the contrary, it is God's plan that gives human history meaning. We do not know how to pray as we should, in the light of God's purposes. But for that very reason his Spirit who dwells in us makes intercession according to the will of God (Rom. 8:27).

II. PRAYER ADDRESSES THE COVENANT GOD

A. Prayer in the bond of the covenant relation

1. Prayer is grounded in God's covenant

Reflection on the personal quality of prayer has already brought us to consider that God is personally present as Saviour, not just Creator. The

fellowship between God and man that existed in the garden of Eden was broken by human sin. Paul in Romans describes the progressive apostasy of mankind. Men gave God up, and God gave men up to the consequences of their sin (Rom. 1:24,26,28). Human lostness consists of both alienation and guilt. Men and women wandered away from God and sought out idols: they are lost like sheep on the hills. They also defied the will of God to serve their own lusts: they are lost like doomed criminals under sentence. Yet God in mercy did not abandon lost mankind to the justice of his judgment. Rather, he revealed his purpose for salvation. God's remedy is both 'to seek and to save that which was lost' (Lk. 19:10). That pattern of God's saving work, climaxed in Jesus Christ, was already evident in the Old Testament. From a lost race scattered and doomed by the resurgence of sin after the flood, God sought out and called Abraham. He promised to bless Abraham and to make him a blessing. In faith Abraham went to the land to which God directed him. There God sealed his covenant with Abraham by taking an oath (Gen. 15:17–21; 22:16; Heb. 6:13–18). Clearly, God's call to Abraham focused on the promise that God made, and to which he swore. Abraham was made the heir, not merely of the land, but of the promise of blessing, blessing in which the nations of the earth would share. By his covenant promise God also put his claim upon Abraham.

The heart of the covenant that God made with Abraham was the relationship that God established. He would be *God* to Abraham: in that relationship was both God's claim and his promise.

> I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you (Gen. 17:7).

Abraham is called to walk before God, to keep the way of the Lord in righteousness and justice. His obedience is to manifest the relationship created by the Lord's taking knowledge of him (Gen. 18:19), a relationship received by faith (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4).

The relation established by God provides the access of prayer. Abraham prays to God about his childlessness, claiming God's covenant promise (Gen. 15:2,3). Because of his relation to God, he intercedes for others. God says, 'Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?' (Gen. 18:17). Abraham prays for Sodom so that his nephew Lot may be spared. He prays for Abimelech, even though Abimelech's problem has been occasioned by Abraham's own failure. Abraham is a prophet whom God hears (Gen. 20:7,17).

Moses, like Abraham, prays on the basis of the covenant relation God has established. Appearing to Moses at the burning bush, God identifies himself by his covenant with Abraham. He hears the cry of enslaved Israel because they are the descendants of Abraham, to whom God bound himself (Exod. 3:6). God claims Israel and demands that Pharaoh let his people go: 'Israel is my firstborn son . . . Let my son go, so he may worship me' (Exod. 4:22,23). God leads Israel his son out of Egypt to enter into covenant with him at Sinai.

2. *Prayer pleads the covenant relation*

The importance of the covenant bond for prayer appears vividly when Israel

rebels against the Lord. Even while the covenant ordinances are being given to Moses on the mountain, Israel is sinning in the worship of a golden calf.

Moses intercedes with God for Israel, pleading God's covenant promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exod. 32:13). He argues the honour of God's name: what will the Egyptians and the Canaanites say if God destroys the people that he delivered from Egypt? (Exod. 32:12; Deut. 9:27–29; Num. 14:13–16). Above all, Moses calls upon God to remember his own mercy and the faithful love that he has toward his own. God has bound himself to Israel by the strong cords of his own covenant love, his *ḥesed* (Exod. 34:6; Num. 14:18).[15]

The intercession of Moses for rebellious Israel shows both the claim and promise of God's covenant. God's covenant claimed his people for himself, God's promise showed the meaning of that bond: not only what God would *do* for Israel, but what he would *be*: their God, dwelling in their midst. After Israel's worship of the golden calf at the very foot of Mount Sinai, God judged the idolatrous nation: many died. He then threatened to cancel the plans for the building of the tabernacle. The tabernacle was to be God's tent, his dwelling among the tents of Israel. But now God said that it was not safe for them to have his dwelling in the midst. Instead, he would go before them in the Angel of his presence, drive out the wicked inhabitants of Canaan, and give them the land as he had promised. No tabernacle need be built for his dwelling; rather, God would appear in the cloud of glory at the door of a tent pitched outside the camp. In that tent Moses and Joshua would be sheltered to meet with God. It was a tent of meeting, not of God's dwelling. God would not be present in the midst of the camp.

Moses and the people responded with grief and dismay. Moses cried, 'If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here' (Exod. 33:15). The whole point of the journey to Canaan would be lost if God's presence in the midst were lost. God was not simply liberating a people to give them a homeland: he was leading them to a place of fellowship, to a land where he would 'set his name' at the place of his dwelling among them (Deut. 12:5).

What plea would Moses use to seek the restoration of God's original purpose? He could not promise improved performance on the part of Israel. His only hope was to cast himself on the rich mercy of God, and to plead his promises. God had professed to know Moses by name, that is, to choose Moses as his son and servant. Let Moses, then, know God by name: 'Teach me your ways so I may know you . . . Show me your glory' (Exod. 33:13,18). God granted the prayer of Moses. He passed by before Moses so that his glory might be seen, and he proclaimed his name to Moses. He is Yahweh, the I Am, who declares, 'I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion upon whom I will have compassion' (Exod. 33:19). Moses cannot look upon his face and live, but he can hear his name proclaimed: Yahweh, the God who is full of grace and truth (Exod. 34:6). John alludes directly to this passage in the introduction to his Gospel. He reminds us that, while no man has seen God, the grace and truth that was promised through Moses was given in Jesus Christ (John 1:14–18). In him God has finally tabernacled among his people, and the prayer of Moses is answered: they see the glory of the Lord. When Philip echoed Moses' prayer, Jesus answered, 'Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father' (John 14:9).

The name of the Lord, freshly proclaimed, became the basis of Moses' prayer.[16] He pleads that God will go in the midst of the 'stiff-necked' people, 'forgive our wickedness and our sin, and take us as your inheritance' (Exod. 34:9). To turn aside the threat of God's removal from the midst of Israel, Moses could appeal at last only to God's willingness to reveal his own nature as the God of the covenant and of *ḥesed*. Not Israel's devotion to the Lord, but the Lord's devotion to Israel is the plea of Moses the intercessor. Significantly, Moses does not pray that Israel may be given the inheritance of the land, but that Israel be made God's inheritance. Having *seen* the glory of God, Moses *seeks* the glory of God. The glory of being God's possession is the greatest blessing of his people. The tabernacle was built in the midst of the camp, a symbol of God's claim and blessing in Christ (Jn. 1:14).

Those who are brought into covenant relation with God plead his mercy and cast themselves by faith on his grace. At the same time, their relation to the Holy God requires of them the obedience of those who have been made the people of God. To have God as your God is to live before him. The presence of God opens the door of prayer; it also opens our lives before him. Ceremonial cleanness, the core of the levitical ordinances, symbolises the reality of God's presence among his people (Deut. 23:9–14). The people are to be holy, as God is holy: the ceremonial law symbolises that moral purity (2 Cor. 6:14–7:1; Num. 19).

3. *Prayer and the ceremonies of covenant worship*

The tabernacle vividly symbolised the presence of God among Israel. The spiritual reality that Moses so desperately sought was made visible in a tent of leather and linen, and later in the cedar and gold of Solomon's temple. On the one hand, the elaborate symbolism of the tabernacle and temple might seem to institutionalise God's presence. No longer did God appear to an Israelite in Bethel as he had once appeared to Jacob. God was now to be worshipped at Jerusalem, in the place where he had put his name. An appointed priesthood mediated worship; a sacred calendar prescribed the times of worship; a detailed directory fixed the cultic actions. But on the other hand, God's appearing to Jacob or to Abraham had been only occasional. In contrast, the temple symbolised the *abiding* dwelling of God; the worshipper could come with confidence to the house of God, knowing that he could enter his courts with praise. God was present in his house, ready to receive the sacrifices he had appointed and to hear the prayers of his people. Indeed, Solomon, in dedicating the temple, recognised that this house of God was the place to which all nations were called to direct their prayers (1 Kgs. 8:41–43).

Only with the coming of Christ was the tension between the personal and the institutional resolved. Jesus presented his body as the true temple (John 2:19–21). His was the sacrifice foreshadowed at the altar of the temple, his is the royal priesthood of the Messiah (Zech. 6:12,13; Ps. 110:4; Heb. 6:19–20). There is one place of worship, one place where God is immediately present. That place is not Mount Gerizim, as Samaritan tradition taught, but neither is it Jerusalem (John 2:19–21; 4:21). The veil of the temple is torn in half. The way to heaven is now opened through the veil of Christ's flesh (Heb. 10:20). No longer can there be a holy place on earth: not even on Mount Zion. Christ has entered into the true tabernacle, the dwelling of God in heaven (Heb. 8:1,2).

The mediatorial role of the priesthood indicated the distance that remained between a sinful people and a holy God. Only a divinely appointed representative of the people could stand before God's face to offer the petitions of the people, symbolised in the burning incense (Exod. 30:1–10; Ps. 141:2; Luke 1:10). Yet, if the priesthood functioned as a buffer, it also showed the intimate approach that lay at the heart of God's covenant. The Old Testament priesthood is not abolished, it is fulfilled. Only through the ministry of the perfect High Priest can the once-for-all sacrifice be offered, and the mediation of a heavenly priesthood be forever established. Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is uniquely qualified to minister the new covenant as a royal priest, seated on the right hand of the Father. There he ever lives to make intercession as the Advocate of the people of God (Heb. 7:25).

The intimacy of new covenant prayer does not flow directly from the simple fact that all believers have now become priests. We must not forget that Peter is quoting from the Old Testament when he declares, 'But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood' (1 Pet. 2:9; Exod. 19:6). The people served by the sons of Aaron were themselves a holy nation. In the new covenant God has not simply eliminated priestly mediation by promoting every believer to priestly status. Rather, it is Jesus Christ, the true and final Priest, who fulfils the priestly office. True, we have an access far more intimate than even the high priest of the old covenant. But we have it in Christ, who has entered heaven for us. We draw near to God through him; our boldness to enter the holy of holies in heaven itself is a boldness we gain from the finished sacrifice and continuing advocacy of Jesus Christ (Heb. 4:14–16; 7:25; 10:19–22). Our prayer is not intimate because it is unmediated. It is intimate because Christ, the Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, is our Mediator.

The concreteness, the specific location of the presence of God symbolised in the temple now has its fulfilment, not in a building made of stone and cedar, but in the incarnate person of the Lord. In Jesus Christ, God is personally present. By his Spirit he is present where two or three are gathered in his name (Mt. 18:20). By his Spirit we enter the heavenly Jerusalem in worship to gather with the saints and angels, and to be led in our worship by Jesus himself, the one Mediator between God and man (Heb. 12:22–24).

The fulfilment in Jesus Christ must also be kept in view to understand the relation between prayer and sacrifice. Because sacrifice was an outward ceremonial it could be substituted for the heart attitude that God's covenant demanded. For that reason the prophets condemn the offering of sacrifices as meaningless ritual on the part of people who have turned aside from obedience to God (Isa. 1:11–17; Jer. 6:20; Mal. 1:10). Yet the place of sacrifice continues to be acknowledged in the prayers of Israel in the Psalms. Particularly are the vows of thank-offerings mentioned (Ps. 22:22,25; 54:6; 116:14; Jonah 2:9). Whether literally or figuratively, the paying of vows to God is expressed as the way in which God's saving mercies are acknowledged. The prayer of David in Psalm 51 brings together the sacrifice of a broken heart and the thank-offering of restored fellowship (Ps. 51:16–19).

4. *Prayer in the community of the covenant*

God's covenant was never exclusively individual. At Sinai, all the people redeemed from Egypt entered into covenant with the Lord. Indeed, it was

God's covenant that formed a nation, a people of God, from the mixed multitude that came out of Egypt. God's words, mediated through Moses, were addressed to all the assembled people.

The consciousness of God's dealings with Israel colours the prayers of individual Israelites. The prayer of Hannah is suspect to the critics: it seems more appropriate as a hymn for the nation than as the thanks of a simple woman to whom God gave a son (1 Sam. 2:1–10). The hymns of the first chapter of Luke have a similar cast, reflecting, as they do, Hannah's song. Yet we fail to appreciate how deeply the consciousness of God's promises to the people were woven into the piety of each member of the community. Indeed, the deeper a person's trust in the Lord, the stronger is the awareness of God's covenant promises.

In the Psalms that same corporate consciousness is present. Many of the Psalms are 'we' psalms, addressing praise and petitions to the God of Israel in the first person plural. But the individual psalms are also corporate. They appear in the Psalter, not as samples of private poetry, nor even as the prayers of typical Israelites. Rather, the individuals speak as representatives of the people of God. This is particularly clear in the psalms of David, who writes as the king, the royal servant of the Lord. His tribulations are troubles for all the people of God; his enemies are the enemies of God and of the nation; his victories show the outstretched hand of the covenant God. Other individual psalms are also the words of servants of the Lord. Their cry is one in which all the people of God may join.

God's judgments on Israel's sin brought destruction and captivity. The prophets, however, promised that a remnant would be spared and that renewal would come. The winnowing process pointed to an Israel within Israel: a small but faithful number who would be circumcised in heart and renewed in sprit. As a refining process, the captivity put a new emphasis on prayer, and on individual prayer. Daniel prays faithfully in personal devotion. Yet Daniel prays facing Jerusalem (Dan. 6:10). His prayer is corporate in language and in burden (Dan. 9:3–20). Like Moses, he intercedes for the people of God.

Jesus prays alone, and teaches the need for private prayer. In contrast to the publicity-seeking Pharisees, the disciples are to pray to the Father in secret (Mt. 6:5,6). Yet Jesus also chides his disciples that they could not watch with him in prayer in Gethsemane (Mt. 26:40). He teaches them to pray together, '*Our* Father, which art in heaven . . .' In the new covenant as in the old, the people of God join in praise, confession, petition and thanksgiving. The revelation of God's full and final salvation in Christ binds those born of the Spirit in a fellowship of prayer. Individual prayer is not put above corporate prayer as more spiritual, more profound, or more pleasing to God.

B. God's covenant Lordship shapes prayer

1. God's zeal for pure worship

Access to God in prayer implies that we seek to do the will of God. The covenant love of God for his people is a jealous love. God will tolerate no rivals. He will not be consigned to a polytheistic pantheon to be worshipped along with Baal and Astarte. To belong to God is to forsake the false gods (Exod. 20:5; 34:13; Deut. 4:23,24). Solomon dedicated the temple of the

Lord in prayer, but he later violated God's covenant by erecting a shrine to Chemosh, the god of the Moabites (1 Kgs. 11:7; cf. Deut. 13:6–8). John reminds Christians of their loyalty to Jesus Christ: 'He is the true God and eternal life. Dear children, keep yourselves from idols' (1 John 5:20,21). As God reveals himself in his Son, his zeal for exclusive worship demands that we come to God through him: 'Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved' (Acts 4:12).

The jealousy of God burns not only against the false gods, but against any idol that would be placed in his temple, any representation of him, the true God. He reminded Israel that they saw no form or likeness when he spoke to them from the fire on Sinai (Deut. 4:15). In the tabernacle the throne of God was symbolised by the golden lid of the ark of the covenant. That throne was attended by figures of the cherubim, but there was no representation of God. God's ban on images of himself did not mean that no image was possible; God had made mankind in his own image and likeness. It was the design of God that his own Son would take human flesh to reveal him. The 'mercy seat' awaited the coming of Jesus Christ. God's jealousy against idolatry is jealousy for his Son, who alone can reveal his Father (Mt. 11:27).

The limitation and the freedom of Christian prayer have the same root. God alone can tell us how he will be worshipped. Israel was warned against adapting their worship to the religious customs of the Canaanites. Israel, on entering the land, was not to say, 'How do these nations serve their gods? We will do the same'. Rather, God warned his people: 'You must not worship the LORD your God in their way . . . see that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it' (Deut. 12:30–32). Only God can teach us how to worship or pray; we are therefore bound to his commandments. Yet this limitation is the fountain of our liberty in prayer. No one can bind our conscience to prescribed forms or rituals of prayer. We are not to pattern our prayers on the incantational spells of the heathen, who suppose that they may be heard for their much speaking, or who have discovered the mesmerised transformation of consciousness that can arise from endless repetition. Even the Lord's Prayer is recorded in the New Testament in two slightly different versions (Mt. 6:9–13; Luke 11:2–4). This principle, however, does not rule out the use of forms of prayer to enable a group or congregation to pray in unison. The richly indwelling word of Christ is the source of corporate song by which the congregation praises God and is built up (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19,20). Such songs are themselves often prayers. Unison prayers whether sung, chanted, or recited play an important part in worship. The use of such forms, however, must always be qualified by the freedom God has given to his people in prayer, both individually and corporately.

2. *Our zeal for our Lord*

a. *Expressed in submission to his will*

The bond of God's gracious devotion toward his people draws us to a corresponding zeal. Prayer in the fellowship of God's covenant is not a grudging acceptance of his revealed will. Rather, it is zealous concern for his glory and for the accomplishment of his purposes. The petition that Jesus taught, 'Thy will be done', has the whole Old Testament for its background. Elijah cried, 'I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty' (1 Kgs.

19:10,14). To be sure, the prophet's confession was also his complaint, but it yet expresses the devotion to God that is the fruit of faith among God's servants.

In seeking 'a better country, that is, a heavenly' the Old Testament saints were expressing their faith in God's purposes and designs. Abraham submitted to God's will even when God's command to sacrifice his son seemed to cancel the very promise that had been fulfilled in the gift of Isaac. Abraham told his servants, 'Stay here . . . We will worship and then we will come back to you' (Gen. 22:5). The word for 'worship' is a common term; it means to bow or prostrate oneself in prayer.[17] The unqualified submission of that posture symbolised the heart of Abraham's faith. In the covenant relation, God is the Lord, Abraham his servant. It is for the Lord to command, and the servant to obey. Abraham submitted: 'Thy will be done!' In faith, Abraham refused to see God's command as a betrayal of his promise. Isaac was given by a miracle; if need be, he would be restored by a miracle: 'Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death' (Heb. 11:19). On the slopes of Mount Moriah Abraham told Isaac, 'God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son' (Gen. 22:8). When God did provide his beloved Son as the Lamb, Jesus prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will' (Mt. 26:39). Jesus cast his body on the ground and his spirit on the Father. Here we may see the deepest meaning of prayer according to the will of God. In Gethsemane Jesus entered the mystery of God's purpose revealed to Abraham on Mount Moriah, the purpose that brought darkness over Calvary. Never will any child of God be called upon to bear the abandonment to wrath that was the Father's will for his Son. Only Jesus could endure that for us. Yet in our prayers we, too, may ask the Father to remove our cup of suffering. When the cup remains, Jesus himself enables us to say, 'Not as I will, but as you will'. His grace is sufficient; his power is made perfect in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:8–10).

The servant of the Lord, however, does not always walk in darkness, or face God's will as mystery. He reflects on the meaning of God's works, and meditates on the word of God (Ps. 1:2; 119:97; 145:5). The apostolic preaching of the cross knew the joy of a mystery revealed: the cross of Christ that had seemed to be the end of all their hopes was actually the beginning of hope that reached beyond the grave. We do not understand the ways of the Lord; much remains in mystery, but, reflecting on the wonder of God's redemption, we may already begin our praise (Ps. 35:28; 71:24; 105:2).

b. *Expressed in confession, seeking forgiveness*

Since prayer is offered by a sinful people, God's Lordship demands that we confess the holiness of God and penitently plead for forgiveness of sin. To draw near to the Lord in prayer is to cry out with Isaiah, 'Woe is me! . . . I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty' (Isa. 6:5).

In the Psalms David confesses his personal transgressions, and cries to God for forgiveness, cleansing, and restoration (Pss. 32; 51; 6:1,2; 38:1–4; 40:12). His greatest joy centres in the mercy of God who removes our transgressions from us as far as the east is from the west (Ps. 103:12). Many Psalms written in the first person singular express awareness of sin and look to the Lord for forgiveness (*e.g.* Ps. 130:3,4; 143:2).

It is true that the psalmist will often plead his own faithfulness to God, and his innocence of transgression (*e.g.* Pss. 17:4,5; 44: 17,18). This is common in the psalms of refuge (*e.g.* 7, 11, 17, 31, 142) and in other psalms where the psalmist appeals to God for judgment against his adversaries.[18] In this setting the psalmist's protestations of innocence do not imply a claim to sinless perfection; rather, they plead 'not guilty' to accusations. The Lord's servant may also contrast his own faithfulness to God with the wickedness and treachery of his enemies (Ps. 26:1–6). This leads to the theme of suffering of the righteous servant of the Lord. The wicked appear to prosper, while the godly suffer (Pss. 37; 73). In Job as in the Psalms the issue of God's justice is raised. On a deeper level, the psalmist perceives that he suffers for the Lord's sake: 'For zeal for your house consumes me, and the insults of those who insult you fall on me' (Ps. 69:9). The figure of the righteous servant, suffering, as did Moses and David, for the Lord's sake, becomes a type of Christ, the truly righteous Servant of the Lord (John 2:17).

Corporate as well as personal sin is confessed. Moses confessed the sin of Israel and prayed that God might remain amongst his people and forgive their sin (Exod. 34:9). The cries of sinful Israel to the Lord punctuate the book of Judges. Repeatedly the people rebelled against God, were judged by military defeat and oppression, and then sought deliverance from their enemies (Judg. 2; 3:15). Yet their cries were far from genuine repentance. Later, godly kings (Joash, Hezekiah, Josiah) took the initiative in expressing repentance and in taking action against idolatry. In connection with the exile, major prayers of repentance are included in the covenantal history. Psalm 106 reviews the melancholy history of Israel's disobedience leading up to the exile. Daniel prays eloquently, confessing the sin that led to the exile, and claiming the promise of God for restoration (Dan. 9:3–19). Nehemiah prays in a similar fashion (Neh. 1:5–11); the returning exiles are assembled and led in a great prayer of repentance by the Levites (Neh. 9:5–37). The penitent people cast themselves on God's *ḥesed* (Neh. 9:32).

c. *Petitions*

Prayer and petition are nearly synonymous; God is addressed out of the depth of human weakness and need. The cry for deliverance is the continual petition of Old Testament believers. King Hezekiah spreads before the Lord the threatening letter of the Rabshakeh of the besieging army of Assyria. His plea is direct: 'Now, O LORD our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, O LORD, are God' (2 Kgs. 19:19). The rod of Moses, lifted as an ensign in Israel's battle with the Amalekites, marks utter dependence on the Lord's deliverance. It also expresses the commitment of God to his covenant people. Moses' hand is indeed lifted, but more important, 'A hand is lifted up upon the throne of Jah!' (Exod. 17:16, ASV mg.). *Yahweh-nissi*: the Lord is the lifted ensign of his people; his raised hand grants their deliverance. Through the whole history of Israel the lesson is repeated: 'Salvation is of the LORD' (Jonah 2:9). God can save by a handful against a host (Gideon's band); indeed, by one sole champion, empowered by his Spirit (Samson). David conquers as the Lord's anointed, trusting not in his armament but in the name of the Lord. No impasse is too hopeless, no predicament too impossible for the Lord. Jonah's psalm celebrates the sure hope of God's deliverance from the depths of death.

God's salvation from enemies includes the execution of his sentence against them (*e.g.* Pss. 54:5,7; 58:6–11; 69:22–28; 79:6; 94:1,2; 109:12; 137:7–9). The righteous name of the Lord must be vindicated against those who blaspheme his name and persecute his people. Such judgments are often sought in psalms that appeal to the Lord for the adjudication of a cause. Not only does the psalmist plead his own innocence of offence; he also describes the guilt of his accusers and persecutors, and calls for God's just judgment (*e.g.* Pss. 3:7; 5:10; 7:6,12,15,16). The Lord abhors the bloody and deceitful man, and will destroy those who speak lies (Ps. 5:4–6). The violence of the wicked will descend upon his own head (7:15,16). The psalmist knows God's judgment is certain; he calls on the Lord to deliver his saints by a speedy execution of justice (Pss. 10:1,14–18; 11:6; cf. 12:5). Retribution is sought with a vehemence that has experienced the horror of atrocities: those who are responsible for such evils deserve to receive themselves the punishments they have inflicted (Ps. 137:8).

Jesus teaches his disciples to love their enemies; they are not to call down God's wrath upon their persecutors, but to pray for them (Mt. 5:43–48). The marvel of God's own love for his enemies appears at the cross. While we were yet enemies, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8–10). Christ's teaching is sometimes presented as in flat contradiction to the imprecatory psalms. Yet Jesus unequivocally teaches the holiness of God and his wrath against sin (Mt. 5:22; 25:41; Luke 13:4). Indeed, apart from God's just judgment on sin, the death of Christ on the cross would be unnecessary. The wrath of God remains for those who are yet unreconciled to God in Christ (2 Thess. 1:7–9). The apostles preached the gospel by warning of the coming judgment, and of every man's accountability before God (Acts 10:42; 17:31). The Christian does not take vengeance into his own hands, but he does leave vengeance in God's hands (Rom. 12:19). In the book of Revelation, as in the Old Testament, the saints cry out to God for the deliverance and vindication of the people of God (Rev. 6:9–11).

The wars of Israel were holy wars, fought at God's command to execute his sanctions. They symbolised the last judgment. When Christ by his coming changed the form of the people of God, the sign of the sword was removed from the church. Its sanctions are now only spiritual, not temporal. The people of God are not called to theocratic war. Christ came to bear the final judgment on the cross, not to inflict the final judgment from the throne. In this age, judgment is withheld so that men and women may repent. The church does not pray imprecatory psalms against those who persecute it. Rather, those psalms are now the battle-cry of the church against the hosts of Satan. We pray for a different victory over the human enemies of the gospel: the victory of God's saving grace (2 Cor. 2:14–16).

Besides praying for deliverance from enemies, God's people also sought deliverance from evils and ills. As a blessing of his covenant God promised Israel freedom from the diseases that he had placed in judgment on the Egyptians: 'I am the LORD who heals you' (Exod. 15:26). Hezekiah prayed to God for healing, and was delivered from mortal illness. In contrast, Asa was attended by physicians, but failed to seek his healing from the Lord (2 Kgs. 20:1–11; cf. 2 Chr. 16:12).

God's people had other needs besides deliverance. These, too, are

reflected in the prayers of the old covenant. They need God's guidance and provision in the wilderness: the pillar of cloud to lead them; the manna and water from the rock to sustain them. Prayer for guidance appears early in the Pentateuch. We find a beautiful prayer by the steward of Abraham, sent to find a bride for Isaac (Gen. 24:12–14). David, who knew the uncertainties of life as a fugitive in the wilderness, prayed: 'Let the morning bring me word of your *hesed*, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul' (Ps. 143:8). Solomon, confronted with the task of reigning over Israel, prayed to God for wisdom so that he might know how to guide God's people (1 Kgs. 3:9).

Psalm 107 pictures the people of God, scattered and wandering in the desert, crying out in their hunger and thirst (v.4–6). It is the Lord who answers their prayer: 'He satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things' (v.9). The dependence of Israel on manna in the wilderness is reflected in the prayer the Lord taught to his disciples: 'Give us this day our daily bread' (Mt. 6:11).[19] The depth of such a prayer appears in the New Testament. The provision of the manna symbolises the giving of Christ as the Bread of heaven (John 6:32–35); the provision of the water from the smitten rock points to Christ from whose heart flow rivers of living water, the water of the Spirit (Exod. 17:6; 1 Cor. 10:4; John 7:37–39; 19:34).[20]

d. *Thanksgiving, praise, and hope*

The greatest desire of the people of God goes beyond deliverance from surrounding enemies and the provision of daily needs. It stretches toward the fulfilment of the promises of God. Moses prayed to know the Lord; like the patriarchs of old, the prophets desired a better country, a heavenly one (Heb. 11:16). God himself must at last be the inheritance of his people. 'Whom have I in heaven but you? And being with you, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever' (Ps. 73:25,26).

Throughout the Psalms, the supreme good that is sought is God himself (Pss. 4:7; 16:11; 17:15; 23; 27:4; 36:9; 42:1,2; 63:1–8; 131). The psalmist thirsts for God, yearns to appear before God, to dwell in his courts. This desire also points toward God's promise of future blessing, a promise linked to his coming as Judge and Saviour (Pss. 96:13; 98:9).

The true worshippers of the Lord will not end prayer with petition. They will realise to whom their petition is being addressed, and sensing the presence of God, will move to praise. In psalms where an individual voices his lament there is also praise in the assurance of being heard. For example, Psalm 22 alternates lamentations with expressions of trust. This pattern is followed by a cry for deliverance (vv.19–21) that is immediately succeeded by an assurance of being heard, 'And from the horns of wild oxen you have answered me!' (v.21).[21] The psalmist then describes the thank-offering of praise that he will present in the midst of the worshipping congregation (v.22), and concludes with a magnificent doxology. Claus Westermann observes that while the urgent situation described in these psalms still remains (the sufferer has not been delivered), yet the prayer is regarded as realised. God may be praised, the thank-offering may be held in view, because God will answer. The transition to the assurance of being heard is therefore the

real theme of these Psalms (Pss. 6:8; 10:17; 13:6; 28:6; 31:7,21; 54:7; 56:13). 'They are no longer mere petition, but petition that has been heard. They are no longer mere lament, but lament that has been turned to praise.'[22]

The praise of God in the Psalms is both declarative and descriptive. God is praised for what he has done and for who he is. Such praise looks naturally toward the future, for God will come, and fulfil his promise in David's Son, his Anointed (2 Sam. 7:18–29).

C. The renewal of the covenant restores and renews prayer

Prayer in the Old Testament points forward to fulfilment in the New. There is a deepening emphasis on prayer in the prophets. The sin of Israel was not a lack of prayer: prayer was regularly and publicly practised. But many in Israel addressed their prayer to other gods. Those who did pray to the Lord offered their words but not their hearts. The prophets condemn the hypocritical pretence of such formal prayers: 'When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood . . .' (Isa. 1:15). Jesus cited the prophecy of Isaiah to condemn the lip-worship of those whose hearts were far from God (Mt. 15:8; Isa. 29:13). Isaiah pours out a prayer of penitence on behalf of those who will heed his message:

> All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away . . . Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are all the work of your hand . . . Oh, look upon us, we pray, for we are all your people. (Isa. 64:6–9).

Few indeed joined the prophets in prayers of penitence. The prophets warned of the approaching storm of God's judgments. Israel in the north was carried captive by the Assyrians. Then the clouds of judgment gathered over Judah. Jeremiah cried out in agony to God as the storm broke and the invading armies came. The vocabulary of distress fills the book of Lamentations. Jeremiah voices his personal grief, but mourns above all for the doom pronounced upon Jerusalem. So severe is the judgment of God's justice against the people that Jeremiah is forbidden even to pray for them (Jer. 7:16; 11:14; 14:11).

Yet the prophets looked beyond the darkness to a dawn of mercy. God's judgments against his people would be neither total nor final. A remnant would be spared, and to that despised remnant God would fulfil promises too marvellous to be described. The faithful are summoned to pray to the Lord for the restoration and renewal that only he can give: 'Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and will show thee great things, and difficult, which thou knowest not' (Jer. 33:3 ASV). Those who pray for the future blessings of God cannot even conceive of what they will include. They are hidden things, like the inaccessible treasures of a fortified city.[23] God himself will perform them: he will come to be their Saviour. His coming is joined with the coming of the Son of David, God's anointed. 'In those days, and at that time, will I cause a Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land' (Jer. 33:15 ASV).

In the renewal of that day, the people will call and the Lord will answer.

They will cry, and he will say, 'Here I am!' (Isa. 58:9). Indeed, 'Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear' (Isa. 65:24). The open communion of prayer will be the supreme blessing of God's presence with his people (Zech. 13:9). In that time of blessing even the Gentiles will call upon the name of the Lord, and will be heard. God will reveal himself to the Gentiles because his own people have ignored his outstretched hands (Isa. 65:1; Rom. 9:20; 10:21). But at last God will make himself known to the full number of his people from Israel as well as from the Gentiles. The enemy nations Egypt and Assyria will pray to the Lord for healing and restoration; they, along with Israel, will be made a blessing in the earth (Isa. 19:19–25). 'Then will I purify the lips of the peoples, that all of them may call on the name of the LORD' (Zeph. 3:9).

How will God purify the lips of sinful Israel and of the unclean Gentiles? He must come, not only as the Warrior (Isa. 59:16,17), and as the Shepherd (Ezek. 34:11,12); he must come in the person of his Servant to bear their iniquities. The greatest prayer of the Old Testament is the prayer of the victorious Messiah, the prayer of intercession that pleads his atonement:

> Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (Isa. 53:12).

The prophets, proclaiming God's promises, call for true repentance (Isa. 58:6–8). Those who pray for the promised mercy must confess their sins, renounce their idols, and return to the Lord (Hos. 14:1–3; cf. Isa. 55:6–13).

In the judgment of the exile God did strip away from Israel the evil of open idolatry. Those who remained faithful to the God of the convenant began to seek his face in penitent prayer. God's word to the prophet Zechariah describes the repentance of the exiles in Babylon. They confessed that God's judgments had come, just as the prophets had predicted (Zech. 1:6).[24]

Daniel found in the prophecy of Jeremiah the promise that after seventy years the captivity would be ended. The time was near: Daniel earnestly prayed for the promised restoration (Dan. 9:2,17–19). The great prayers of confession of sin that we find in Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah eloquently summarise the history of Israel's unfaithfulness and God's continuing mercy. The prayer of Ezra comes with particular poignancy, for he fears that the returning exiles are again becoming involved with the heathen (Ezra 9:5–15).

The return from exile after seventy years was indeed a fulfilment of God's promise. Yet Ezra tells of the weeping of the oldest men when the foundations of the temple were laid (Ezra 3:12). They remembered the glory of the former house of God. The restoration under Ezra and Nehemiah fell far short of the promised glory. The post-exilic prophets therefore still point ahead to the great day of the Lord. Zechariah tells of the nations coming to worship the God of Israel (Zech. 14:16,17). The glory of Jerusalem passes description: the pots of the city will be like temple vessels. The weakest inhabitant will be like King David. What then of the King? He will be as the angel of the Lord among them (Zech. 12:8)! The promises will at last be fulfilled when God himself comes, when his Spirit is poured out, when the Sun of righteousness rises with healing in his wings (Mal. 4:2).

III. PRAYER ADDRESSES THE TRIUNE GOD

A. The renewal and fulfilment of prayer in Christ

1. Fulfilment of the petition of the faithful remnant

Four centuries elapsed after the last prophetic word was spoken to the returned exiles. In that period prayer became central in the services of the synagogue. The 'Eighteen Benedictions' in an early form appear to go back to the time of Christ. The first three petitions praise God as the Creator, the God of the fathers, the holy and the only God. They go on to confess sin, to call upon God to give repentance and forgiveness and to visit Israel with redemption.[25] In the Psalms of Solomon the Messianic hope is strongly expressed (Ps. Sol. 17:23[21]).[26]

Formalism again undercut the fervency of true prayer, but God preserved men and women to pray for the coming of his salvation. God had promised not only that he would restore and renew his people, but that he would answer prayer in doing so: 'For this, moreover, will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them' (Ezek. 36:37 ASV; Zech. 10:6). In grace God raised up those who would plead his promises.

That grace appears as God lifts the curtain on the first scene of the new covenant. It is the hour of prayer; God sends his angel to the altar where a priest of Aaron's lineage is offering incense. In the courtyard of the temple the people are assembled in prayer. As the incense and the prayer ascend, the angel tells Zachariah that his personal prayers have been answered (Luke 1:13). As God gave Sarah a son centuries before, so God will now give a son to Elizabeth. That son will be John, the forerunner of the Messiah. The speechless priest cannot pronounce the customary blessing, but it is God who has pronounced blessing for his people.

The theme of God's answer to prayer is again portrayed in the figures of Simeon and Anna who greet the infant Jesus in the temple (Luke 2:25–38). These aged saints represent 'all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem' (Luke 2:38). The prophetess Anna bears the joyful word to those who, like her, have been praying night and day (v.37).

The songs of Mary (Luke 1:46–55), Zachariah (vv.68–79), and Simeon (2:29–32) follow the patterns of the Psalms and the prophets in praising the Lord for his coming in salvation.[27] Mary's hymn reflects the song of Hannah (1 Sam. 2:1–10). The mystery of new covenant fulfilment already appears: God's grace is revealed to the poor and lowly. The songs celebrate the fulfilment of God's glorious promises, but a fulfilment that runs counter to all the vaunting of man. A humble virgin is the chosen handmaid of the Lord; despised shepherds are surrounded by angelic heralds. God's coming mocks the power and privilege of kings and princes. He hears the cry of the poor.

2. Fulfilment in Christ transforms prayer

a. *Christ comes as Lord to receive prayer*

Prayer addresses the personal God, the Lord who reveals himself to his chosen people as the God of *ḥesed*, devoting himself to the redemption of his own. Through the history of his dealings with his people, God promised to come to them that they might know him, and that he might be made known to

the ends of the earth. The message of the gospel is that the Lord has come (Luke 2:10,11). That for which the true Israel prayed has come to pass. The Holy One conceived by Mary through the power of the Spirit is the Son of God (Luke 1:35). He is Immanuel, God with us (Mt. 1:23). It is he who shall save his people from their sins (Mt. 1:21). John serves as a herald to prepare the way of the Lord. God promised to come himself, marching through the desert in the final Exodus deliverance of his people (Isa. 40:3). John the Baptist takes up the prophecy of Isaiah and announces the coming of the Lord, the One whose shoelace he is not worthy to tie (Mt. 3:1–3,11,12). The angels announce the birth of him who is not simply the Lord's Anointed; he is the anointed Lord (Luke 2:26,11 ASV mg.). The Gospel of John announces the coming into the world of him who is the Light of the nations. The Word was *with* God, God's eternal Fellow; the Word *was* God, God's own Self (John 1:1–4).

It is the glory of the Holy One of God that is revealed in the ministry of Jesus Christ (John 6:69). He comes to reveal by word and deed who he is, and to call sinners to put their trust in him. He hears the petitions of the sick and afflicted, and shows his glory by power that gives sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, strength to the paralysed, life to the dead (Luke 7:22; Isa. 35:4,5). Yet these miracles are but signs of the deity of the One who has power on earth to forgive sins (Mt. 9:2; Mark 2:5,10). The sinful woman worships at his feet: she loves much because she has been forgiven much (Luke 7:47–50). The devils know him and fear the judgment that is his to bring (Luke 8:28). He commands the fish of the sea and stills the storm, walking on the waters with the authority of the Creator (Mt. 14:22–33; Ps. 77:16–19; Isa. 43:15f.; Job 9:8; 38:16,17). Moses and Elijah, the great servants of the Lord of the old covenant cannot compare with him (Luke 9:30,31). The glory that they experienced in their day on the mount of God's revelation now appears again. They are permitted to stand with Jesus in the Mount of Transfiguration. The cloud again covers the Mount. But the shining of glory began not in the cloud, but in the face of Jesus. He it is who is transfigured to reveal the glory that was his before the foundation of the world (John 17:5).

On the Mount of Transfiguration Moses and Elijah speak with Jesus about his 'exodus' to be accomplished at Jerusalem (Luke 9:31). These two great praying prophets, men who had effectively interceded with God, now speak of the mystery of God's salvation. Jesus came in answer to the prayers they offered long ago. He came to do what they could never do: to accomplish that salvation. He came to manifest the presence of God in human flesh; but had that been his only mission, he would have had to come as Judge. Rather, he came in the inexpressible *ḥeseḏ* of God to take the place of sinners on the cross. God was seeking worshippers, and to redeem them he gave his only Son. The 'lifting up' of Jesus on the cross and in his resurrection and ascension completely transformed the meaning and practice of prayer. Prayer was ever a response to the initiative of God's saving grace. But never had the eternal depths of that grace appeared until Christ came and was lifted up on the cross. Prayer had reached out to the personal God; prayer could only claim his promise, his covenant grace. But now God made his covenant anew in the fulfilment of all his promises. What assurance, what boldness, yet what penitent confession must mark the prayer of those who look to the cross of Jesus Christ and to the throne of his exaltation!

b. *Christ comes as Servant to offer prayer*

Christ is the Lord, at whose feet sinners fall in supplication. Yet he is also the Servant of God. As the incarnate Saviour he fulfils both sides of the covenant. He is the Lord of the covenant and comes to gather and claim his scattered sheep (Mt. 9:36; Luke 12:32; John 10:27–29). But he is also the Servant of the covenant. If the blessings of the covenant of grace are to be ours, they must be given to us by the rightful heir of all the promises of God. Only Jesus Christ is the righteous Servant of the Lord; only he fulfils the calling of the true Israel (Rom. 15:8,9; Isa. 49:3). On the one hand, his prayer stands in the line marked out in the Old Testament. The pleas of God's righteous servant come from his lips. He not only sings and quotes the Psalms, he fulfils them. On the cross, his cry of dereliction is not merely a citation from Psalm 22, it is the realisation and fulfilment of that prophetic lament. As Moses, the shepherd of Israel, prayed for the flock that he led through the wilderness, so does Jesus, the Good Shepherd pray for the sheep that the Father has given him. But on the other hand, in fulfilling the role of the praying Servant of the Lord, Jesus transforms it. His prayers are unique, for he who is the Son of Mary is also the Son of God. His prayer is to the Father, his Father, whom as the divine Son he alone knows (Mt. 11:27). He who cried out to the Father in the tears and strong crying of his human nature was the unique Son of God. He could pray with the confidence that he was accomplishing his Father's will; he knew that his Father always heard his prayers (John 11:41,42). In the mystery of the incarnation the divine Person, the Son of God, cried 'Abba' to the Father in whose bosom he was and continued to be from all eternity (Mark 14:36).

Wonderfully, the human nature of Jesus found full expression in his prayers. At every crisis of his ministry he spent hours in prayer. He prayed as he was baptised (Luke 3:21); he prayed before he chose the twelve disciples to be with him (Luke 6:12). After he fed the five thousand, he sent away his disciples, dismissed the multitudes, and went up into a mountain to pray alone (Mark 6:46; Mt. 14:23). The crowds would have marched him to Jerusalem to crown him as their political Messiah. But he came to do his Father's will: he would go to Jerusalem not to wield the spear and bring the judgment, but to receive the spear thrust and bear the judgment. He knew the crowds would leave him; he was already praying for Peter, that his faith would not fail (Luke 22:32). Before he elicited Peter's confession, Jesus prayed (Luke 9:18); he was in prayer on the mountain when he was transfigured (Luke 9:28). He prayed as he raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:41,42). In the garden of Gethsemane he endured an agony of prayer, for there he took the cup of abandonment that he must drink in the place of those who deserved the wrath of God (Isa. 51:17,22; Mt. 26:36–44; Mark 14:35,39; Luke 22:41,45). Before his death he prayed to the Father for those the Father had given him, and for the others who would believe through their word (John 17). On the cross where he cried in forsakenness, he committed his spirit to the Father (Mt. 27:46; Mark 15:34; Luke 23:46).

Jesus was not ashamed to call us brethren; he prayed in the midst of the worshipping congregation on earth, and continues to praise the Father in the festival assembly of heaven (Heb. 2:11,12; 12:24). It was his custom to attend the services of the synagogue (Luke 4:16); he may well have observed the customary three hours of prayer;[28] he cleansed the temple as the house of

prayer for all nations (Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46). His example in prayer led the disciples to ask, 'Lord, teach us to pray' (Luke 11:1). They did not join him, however, in his lonely vigils in the desert or on the mountains (Mark 1:35; 6:46; Luke 5:16; 6:12; Mt. 14:23). When he asked Peter, James, and John to watch in prayer with him in Gethsemane, they slept in exhaustion. Not until the risen Lord sent his Spirit from heaven did his disciples begin to pray with a fervency modelled on their Master's.

Jesus addresses the Father in familiar forms of prayer. He gives thanks, blesses God, offers petitions, and submits himself to the Father's will. He blesses others in the Father's name. But all these forms of prayer are remarkably altered and deepened on the lips of Jesus. His thanksgiving praises the Father for the wonder of his electing love: that he has hidden these things from the wise and prudent and has revealed them to babes (Mt. 11:25; Luke 10:21). Jesus rejoices in the sovereign mercy of the Father's will. His petitions are to the same end. As the hour of the crucifixion draws near, he will not pray the great Old Testament prayer for deliverance: 'Father, save me from this hour!' Rather, he prays, 'Father, glorify thy name!' The coming hour brings the purpose for which he has come into the world. He shrinks back in horror from what that means: separation from his Father. In Gethsemane he asks that, if it be possible, the cup be taken away. But he will not ask for twelve legions of angels to deliver him in flaming judgment (Mt. 26:53). His prayer remains, 'Yet not my will, but yours be done' (Luke 22:42).

Submission to the Father's will, joy in the Father's plan, zeal for the Father's glory: the prayers of Jesus are the prayers of the Son who lifts up the name of his Father and accomplishes on earth the work the Father has given him. Along with his devotion to the Father runs the depth of his intimacy with the Father. The name 'Abba' used by Jesus was colloquial Aramaic; it was familiar, the language of both immature and mature children.[29] Jesus addresses the living God with the intimacy of a little child speaking to his father. The Son knows God as Father, and as Father he reveals him to his disciples. The holy name of God in the new covenant is 'Father', for Jesus opens the relationship that puts that name on our lips.

3. *Christ's teaching renews prayer*

a. *Prayer to the Father*

Jesus taught his disciples to pray, 'Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name'. What immense brevity! Jesus had rebuked the lengthy eloquence of the Pharisees and the endless chanting of the heathen. Repeating 'OM' a thousand times may induce a change of consciousness, but it does not address the God of heaven. Neither may we convert the prayer Jesus taught into a mantra and mumble a hundred 'paternosters' as steps on a ladder to heaven. It is enough to pray as Jesus taught us.

Dare we pray such a prayer? May we address with such simple boldness 'the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords . . .' (1 Tim. 6:15,16)? What effrontery is it to call upon the Lord whose holiness so threatens us, and to ask — of all things — that he hallow his own name? But Jesus teaches us to pray, 'Our Father'. The God of heaven, whose name is infinitely holy, is *Abba*, Father. Those two syllables on the lips of Jesus arch

over the history of redemption. The God of heaven is a God of mercy; he has taken the initiative to save his people. The Father demanded of Pharaoh that he let his son go (Exod. 4:23). He led Israel his child through the wilderness (Deut. 32:6; Hos. 11:1,3). Like a father he grieved over his rebellious son, 'How can I give you up, Ephraim?' (Hos. 11:8). At the last, he did what his love had purposed from the first. He gave his own beloved Son (Rom. 8:32). The Father's Isaac, his passover Lamb, was offered up in the place of sinners (John 1:29; 1 Pet. 1:17–20; Gen. 22:13,14). Jesus, the only Son of the Father, is the substitute who died to pay the price of sin and to bring many sons to glory (Heb. 2:10; 1 Pet. 2:24). Jesus puts 'Abba' on the lips of those who trust in him, for he bought their birth-right with his blood.

Jesus, therefore, does not simply offer to us the example of sonship in prayer. He does far more than model loving and intimate trust in the heavenly Father. Rather, he does what only he could do in the perfection of his divine and human sonship. He saves sinners, brings them to the Father, and gives them a new relation that far exceeds the relation in which Adam and Eve were created. Redeemed sinners can come to the Father only in and through his work, but coming in him, they may address the Father by the very name he uses.

Prayer to the Father is prayer in dependence. The father is the progenitor, from whom the life of the child is derived. As we have seen, the Old Testament passages that speak of God as Father emphasise this (Deut. 32:6; Isa. 64:8). Peter blesses 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again into a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ' (1 Pet. 1:3 ASV). Those who pray 'Our Father' are those who have received new life from above. Their Father has created them and given them new life in Christ.

The Father who gave life also sustains it. We pray to him for our daily bread. As Israel was fed with manna in the wilderness, so God meets our needs day by day. Faith confesses that complete dependence on him for physical and spiritual life. Childlike trust lies at the heart of Jesus' teaching about prayer. Our heavenly Father knows our needs; we may trust him. We may come to him with importunity in our most urgent needs, never forgetting that he cares. Jesus urges persistence in prayer by comparing the holy heavenly Father to an unjust judge, and drawing the powerful *a fortiori* argument. If even sinners give good gifts to their children, and unjust judges will dispense justice to spare themselves annoyance, how much more, how infinitely much more, may the heavenly Father (who has given us all things) be trusted to hear our prayers and to provide good gifts for those who ask him?

There is adoration in the name 'Father'. The caricature of the father in television comedies ill prepares our culture to understand the term as Jesus uses it. The father was the lord of the patriarchal family, and when God is called 'Father' in the Bible, his Lordship is always in view. Jesus prayed, 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth. . .'. It was natural for Jesus to add the words, 'Thy kingdom come' to the address, 'Our Father'. In the teaching of Jesus about the kingdom he speaks of God not as King, but as Father. He promised his disciples that he would eat and drink with them in the Father's kingdom (Mt. 26:29). When Jesus comes again in the power of the kingdom, it will be in the glory of the Father (Luke 9:26).

Real prayer can be destroyed by sentimentality. We dare not say, 'Abba, Father' without recognising that the Father is Lord of heaven and earth. Indeed, precisely because he is Lord, he can provide for us. Jesus said of the birds, 'Your heavenly Father feeds them' (Mt. 6:26). The Psalmist is to call to God: 'You are my Father, my God, the Rock my Saviour' (Ps. 89:26). We pray that the name of God as Father be hallowed. This is not a contradiction, or an inappropriate connection. The Father is the holy God, to be approached with awe.

At the same time, there remains the marvellous intimacy of this prayer. 'As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him' (Ps. 103:13). Jesus, who knows the Father, and can reveal him, tells us the story of the father's welcome for the prodigal (Luke 15). He presents the joy of the father in the son who was lost and is found, was dead and is alive. To tell the story, Jesus puts a self-righteous Pharisee in the role of the elder brother: one who does not understand his father's heart of love, and is scandalised by the feast of celebration. The parable points to the contrast with Jesus himself. Jesus told the story to defend his own actions in eating with publicans and sinners. The elder brother would refuse to do that, even in his father's house. But Jesus does it, and goes to the far country, even to the pig-sty to do it. He is the seeking Shepherd of the first parable in the chapter; he is the true elder brother in contrast to the Pharisaical elder brother of the last. All that the Father has is his, and he gives to us the blessings of the Father's feast of welcome. When Jesus teaches us to pray, 'Our Father', he brings us home to heaven's joy.

The bond of God's covenant is deepened in the new covenant. It goes beyond the model of the treaty a sovereign would make with a vassal. The Sovereign, the Lord, is our Father, and his kingdom is a 'fatherdom' (Eph. 3:14,15). The image of kingdom remains, but it is enriched by the image of the family of God.

'Our Father' is therefore also a prayer of assurance, a prayer that pleads the new covenant faithfulness of the Father who gave his only begotten Son. As Paul points out, it is the Spirit of Christ in our hearts who enables us to pray, '*Abba*, Father' (Rom. 8:15–17). Christ's Spirit is the Spirit of sonship: first of his, then of ours.

b. *The prayer of trust*

The prayer addressed to the Father seeks the glory of his name. That petition asks not simply that *we* may glorify the name of God, but that *he* may do so. At the last, it is the secret of all prayer. It is the petition that God be God; that the glory of his own Being remain and be continuously intensified. All praise prays exactly this.

But the prayer goes on to ask that God's will be done. His name is to be glorified by the full accomplishment of his own plan for salvation. This was the purpose of the mission of the Son. Jesus came proclaiming the message that John had also brought: the kingdom of God was at hand. God's kingdom does not describe a realm so much as a rule. The kingdom of God shows the power and glory of God. God promised to come and to rule. Those who proclaim the good news cry, 'Your God reigns!' (Isa. 52:7). Jesus came as Lord, and in his coming, the kingdom was already present. His miracles were signs of the power of the kingdom. The devils trembled at the presence of the

King of glory. Jesus said, 'But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you' (Mt. 12:28). In his ministry, Jesus brought the power of the kingdom as he accomplished the will of his Father. God's kingdom came with the triumph of Christ over Satan at the cross, with the resurrection victory that carried him to the throne of glory, with the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the church. The kingdom that has come continues to come as the Spirit works with power in the world and as Jesus rules at the Father's right hand. Yet the kingdom is also future. Jesus came once, but he is coming again. The kingdom will come when he comes; this is the great hope of the Christian church.[30] The prayer 'Thy kingdom come' seeks both the advancement of God's kingdom of grace and the coming of his kingdom of glory.

The annoucement of the kingdom by John and by Jesus was linked with the preaching of repentance. The Lord himself had come; men and women must prepare to meet God. 'Who can stand when he appears?' (Mal. 3:2). He is the Judge of all the earth. In the coming of Christ, all the nations are called to accountability before God. When Paul preached the gospel at Athens, he spoke of the ignorance of God among the Gentiles and concluded: 'In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead' (Acts 17:30,31).

The Christ who taught his disciples to pray for forgiveness is the Lord who will judge men in the last day. He did not come to judge men's sins, but to call sinners to repentance. The problem of sin is not simply the guilt we feel, it is the doom we deserve. The Bible condemns every effort to hide sin. When a man tries to live with his guilt, it becomes rottenness in his bones. He must come to the place where he cries out to God, 'Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight' (Ps. 51:4). True religion before God is always the religion of the broken heart. God dwells not only in the high and holy place, but also with the one who has a humble and contrite spirit (Isa. 57:15). God does not hear the prayer of the proud Pharisee thanking God that he is so good, but rather the cry of the wicked tax-collector, beating his breast because he is so bad: 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner' (Luke 18:13).

The glory of the gospel is that forgiveness is to be found with God, forgiveness for sin as a debt. Because God is personal, sin against God is a personal affront; because God is just, sin incurs the penalty of his judgment. God can deal with that sin in both justice and grace. Just as a debt can be cancelled, sin can be forgiven. Jesus not only freed men from the grip of disease and death, he freed them also from the debt of sin: he had the authority to say, 'Your sins are forgiven' (Mt. 9:2,6). Jesus could forgive sin because he came to bear the penalty of sin. In the person of his Son, the holy God himself paid the price of forgiveness. The Judge bore the judgment. Paul can quote with joy from the Psalmist: 'Blessed are they whose trangressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered' (Rom. 4:7,8; Ps. 32:1,2).

In Christ, God's beloved Son, 'we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace . . .' (Eph. 1:7). In praying the Lord's Prayer, we must remember who gave us these words!

'Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.' Forgiveness must issue in forgivingness. The one who knows the reality of God's forgiveness will be ready to forgive others. The comment of Jesus drives this point home: if we do not forgive others, we will not be forgiven (Mt. 6:14,15). The parable of the unforgiving debtor (Mt. 18:23–35) shows that our forgiving does not *merit* our being forgiven. Rather, we have been forgiven an enormous debt, one that goes beyond all reckoning. Compared to the debt that God has forgiven us, the debts that we forgive others are like pocket-money. If we refuse to forgive, not just seven times, but seventy-seven times, we show that we cannot claim the forgiveness of God.

The beautiful simplicity and the breath-taking sweep of the Lord's Prayer set it apart. It is distinctive, above all, in its focus on the Father. We first pray that his name be hallowed, his kingdom come, his will be done. Even when the prayer turns to our own needs, it is through and through prayer before the Father in heaven. The bread that we pray for every day is not ours to command or to control. It is God's gift. Indeed, every meal given from the Father's hand is a foretaste of his final provision in the great feast of his kingdom, when his will is done on earth as in heaven.[31] Our cry for forgiveness recognises not only the presence of the Lord, and therefore our sin, but the presence of our Saviour and the remission of sins.

When Christ's disciples pray, 'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil' we hear yet another petition forged in the presence of the Father. Without the awareness of standing before God, an apostate culture does not seek to escape from temptation. Rather, it builds a society designed to make temptation an everyday convenience. Enticement to sexual sin becomes the standard of advertising, and other lusts for power and pride are equally well provided for. But one who knows the meaning of forgiveness will be aware of the threat of temptation. Only God's mercy can preserve us in the present and deliver us in the future.

There are two great assumptions in this petition: our trust in God and our distrust of ourselves. We pray it because we know that God can control tempation and that God's power directs our lives. The book of Job describes the shield that God puts about his own. Satan can assault Job only as God permits him. At the last, Job is in God's hands, not Satan's. Further, this petition assumes that God can lead us where temptation is. God, of course, cannot be tempted with evil, neither does he tempt anyone in the sense of enticing him into sin (Jas. 1:13,14). God is not the tempter. Yet God does prove his people. He led Israel in the wilderness with the express purpose of proving them and searching their hearts (Deut. 8:2). They needed to learn that they lived, not by bread alone, but by every word that came from the mouth of the Lord. They lived not only by the word spoken from Sinai, but by the word that directed their march. Day by day they were called to walk in the path God ordered for their lives. When Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, he refused to turn the stones into bread at Satan's suggestion. He quoted the passage from Deuteronomy. In the wilderness where his Father had brought him, Jesus would trust. He lived by the word that directed his life; his Father who gave the manna would provide bread in season. Where Israel rebelled, Jesus obeyed.

Jesus would have his disciples ask the Father so to guide their lives as to shield them from temptation. Included in our petition there is profound self-

distrust. No Christian is so strong that he can seek out occasions of temptation. He knows the power of evil, knows that the devil goes about as a roaring lion seeking his prey (1 Pet. 5:8). The Christian knows, too, the weakness of his own sinful nature (Gal. 5:17). When Simon Peter boasted that he would never deny Christ, his pride contained the seed of his denial.

But what of God's use of trials to prove us? Is there not trial that purifies us like the fire of a furnace (1 Pet. 1:7)? Surely the Christian must not seek temptation, but can he pray not to be led into it?

It may help us to remember that Jesus, in Gethsemane, prayed that the cup of suffering might pass from him. He commanded his sleeping disciples to 'watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation' (Mt. 26:41). In the Lord's Prayer as in this charge, Jesus may be teaching us to pray for deliverance from temptation as a threat to our life of obedience. This prayer would then claim God's promise that he will not permit us to be tempted beyond our ability to handle it, but will provide a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13).

It may be, however, that the Lord's Prayer presents us with an even more vivid situation. The petition 'Lead us not into temptation' is paralleled by another: 'Deliver us from evil' (or 'the evil one'). It may be that this last petition of the Lord's Prayer is looking forward to the final onslaught of Satan before Christ comes again. Jesus spoke of tribulation so severe that God must shorten it if even the elect were to be saved (Mt. 24:21,22). In any case, deliverance from the power of Satan is part of the burden of this prayer. Through Christ's victory that deliverance is ours. Paul praises God who has delivered us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son of his love (Col. 1:13). Satan desired to sift Peter as wheat, but Jesus prayed for him that his faith would not fail (Luke 22:31). The Lord is faithful, who guards us from the evil one (2 Thess. 3:3).

c. *Prayer in the name of Jesus*

As we have seen, the Lord's Prayer is his not only in the sense that he taught it, but also in the sense that he is revealed in it. The Father is his Father; he it is who hallows the Father's name on the cross; the kingdom has come with his coming, and will come with his return; he does the Father's will on earth; he is the bread of heaven; he forgives sins with the authority of the Father; he has endured temptation in our place and keeps us in the hour of trial by his intercession.

Although the Lord's Prayer does not mention the name of Jesus, it is a prayer that reveals the Son as well as the Father. Jesus taught the disciples that they should ask of the Father in his name (John 14:13,14; 15:16; 16:23,24). Prayer among God's people claimed his covenant name. He is the 'I Am' God; his name reveals his presence. In Jesus the Son, God is present; the covenant promise is fulfilled.[32] God's name is revealed as Father, but that name has meaning through the divine Son who alone can reveal the Father.

Jesus reveals the Father, making his name known, but the Father also reveals the Son, giving him a name that is exalted above every name (Phil. 2:9–11). Forever at the right hand of God Jesus sits as the God-man. From that throne he sent the Spirit of his glory. Jesus told the disciples that they had not asked in his name, but that 'in that day' they were to use his name in their petitions (John 16:26). The use of his name awaited the sealing of his triumph

with the sending of the Spirit. To pray in his name does not mean simply to append his name to our prayers as a formula, but to confess his name, to acknowledge him as God the Son, the only Way to the Father. It has been well said that prayer in the name of Jesus is prayer through which the self-revelation of Jesus shines.[33] The Father hears us not only because we use the name of his beloved Son, but because we pray in the Spirit of the Son. Through our prayers there echoes the voice and will of Jesus.

4. *Christ the Mediator of Prayer*

a. *The Mediator foreshadowed*

Moses stands as the great mediator of the old covenant. He was chosen and commissioned by the Lord to be his spokesman to Israel and to Pharaoh (Exod. 4:12–16; 7:1). Because the people could not bear to hear the voice of God speaking from Sinai, Moses received from the Lord the words of the covenant to give to Israel (Exod. 19:9; 20:19). God spoke to Moses as a man speaks to another (Exod. 19:11). The unique relation that Moses held as God's servant became the basis of his intercession for Israel. God knew Moses by name, and Moses claimed God's name of mercy for Israel (Exod. 33:12,13; Deut. 9:25,26; cf. 9:9). He even prayed to be made their sin-bearer: to be blotted out of God's book in the place of sinful Israel (Exod. 32:31,32).

Like Moses, later prophets served as mediators, bringing God's word to his people and pleading to God for them. The false prophets are condemned because they did not 'stand in the breach' as mediators (Ezek. 13:5; 22:30). The priests also mediated between God and men. On the day of atonement the high priest went into the most holy place to appear before God for the people (Lev. 16). When he came out again, two priests blew on silver trumpets to announce the blessing of God on the accepted sacrifice (Num. 10:10). The priestly blessing put the name of God upon his people (Num. 6:22–27).

Yet these mediators could not accomplish God's promised redemption. Job cries out for a mediator to plead his case with God (Job 9:33; 13:3; 16:18; 19:25). Moses sees the generation for whom he prayed die in the wilderness, under God's judgment. A greater Servant of the Lord must be raised up to mediate God's salvation. He will come as a royal Servant; he will receive the blessings of God, deliver the people, and establish God's peace and justice (Ps. 2:7; cf. 2 Sam. 7:14). The Psalms describe the sufferings, victory, and glory of the ideal King, the Lord's Anointed (*e.g.* Pss. 22; 72).

In the prophecy of Isaiah the mediatorial role of the Lord's Servant is clearly presented. The Servant is identified with Israel (Isa. 49:3), but he is also the Saviour of Israel, and a light to the Gentiles (Isa. 49:6,7). In his suffering he will do what Moses could not do: he will bear the sin of his people. As the chosen Servant of the Lord, he will make intercession for the transgressors, pleading his own sacrifice for them (Isa. 53).

It is this mediatorial work that Jesus Christ fulfils. He speaks the words given to him by the Father as the final Prophet (John 15:15; 17:8; Heb. 1:1,2; 2:3). He comes to give his life a ransom for many (Mt. 20:28). In his ministry of healing he is revealed as the suffering Servant, who himself bears our diseases, paying the price of sin even as he delivers from the curse (Mt. 8:16,17; Isa. 53:4). He prays for those the Father has given him, even as he

prepares to give his life for them (John 17:9). He raises his hands in the blessing of the true Priest as he ascends to heaven (Luke 24:50,51).

b. *His mediatorial office*

The epistle to the Hebrews focuses on the unique and final position and work of Christ as the Mediator. Turning to the prophecy of Psalm 110, the author affirms that Christ holds the priestly office by divine appointment, an appointment sealed with God's oath: 'The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: "You are a priest forever" ' (Heb. 7:21).

Christ is priest, not by genealogical descent from Aaron, but by divine oath, appointing him to a royal priesthood, like that of Melchizedek. The oath appointing Christ fulfils God's oath to Abraham (Heb. 6:17,18). Christ is made both the guarantee and the Guarantor of the new covenant (Heb. 7:22). We have, therefore, the strongest encouragement for prayer. Christ's appointment to heavenly status as an eternal priest provides for us an anchor in the sanctuary of heaven itself (Heb. 6:18–20). Indeed, heaven becomes our 'sanctuary' as we flee for refuge to Christ (6:18).

Christ is appointed to a final and eternal priesthood. The author of Hebrews contrasts Melchizedek with the priests descended from Aaron: they claim their office by their lineage and pass it on to their successors, but Melchizedek is presented in Genesis (the 'book of generations') as without genealogy or descent. No beginning or end is assigned to the priesthood of Melchizedek.[34] This circumstance provides a fitting symbol of the abiding priesthood of Christ (Heb. 7:3). Christ is unchanging; he lives forever to be the mediator of those who come to God through him (Heb. 7:25).

Underlying the unique appointment of Christ are unique qualifications. What was a symbol in the narrative about Melchizedek is reality in the case of Jesus Christ. He has neither beginning of days nor end of life because he is the Son of God (Heb. 7:3). Nothing short of full deity must be attributed to the One who has become our Mediator (Heb. 1:3–6).[35]

The other side of his qualification is the true humanity of Jesus Christ. The Mediator is identified with God; he is also identified with us. He is *Jesus* the Son of God (Heb. 4:14). He shares our nature, knows our weakness (2: 14–17). Jesus has been tempted and tested in every way, just as we are, yet he was without sin (4:15). Although he is God's Son, he learned obedience through the things that he suffered (5:8). A priest must show sympathetic gentleness (5:2): that compassionate understanding is perfectly expressed in Jesus Christ. He knows our situation totally, not simply by virtue of divine omniscience, but by his incarnate hunger, thirst, and weariness; by the fierce assaults of the devil; above all, by bearing the burden of our sins in the abandonment of his crucifixion. Our High Priest not only prays for us; he feels for us. More than a father pities his children, or a mother her infant, Christ cares and carries our burdens. He understands our needs, hears our prayers, and grants his grace at the right moment (4:16).

Israel, thirsting in the wilderness, accused God of unfaithfulness. 'Is the LORD among us or not?' they cried (Exod. 17:7). The cry of rebellion at Meribah has been forever answered in Christ. The Lord is indeed among us; he is one with us. The wonder of the high priestly ministry of Christ lies not just in *where* he is, but in *who* he is. *Where* he is we may boldly go; he has opened the way to the sanctuary of heaven and the throne of grace. Prayer

enters where God dwells. But the boldness of our approach rests on *who* he is. We know him because he has first known us, and knows us still in all our helplessness and need.

c. *His mediatorial sacrifice*

In the symbolism of Old Testament worship, the altar of sacrifice stood at the entrance of the tabernacle court. The presence of the holy God brought the threat of death as the just punishment of sin. The priest could enter into the presence of God only with the blood of an animal victim. The animal, in a figure, bore the guilt of sin; the blood was evidence that the price had been paid and that the demands of justice had been met.

The blood of bulls and goats, however, could not take away sin. The language of pictorial symbolism pointed to the reality of a divine transaction. Not an animal, but a man must bear human sin. No mere man, however, could pay the price of sin. God did not require Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Not the son of Abraham, but the Son of God was given: the Lord did provide (Gen. 22:14; Rom. 8:32). Jesus Christ, our High Priest, entered the Holy of Holies in heaven itself, not by means of the sacrifice of an animal, but through his own blood (Heb. 9:12). He, the Priest, is also the sacrifice. He offered himself without blemish to God through his eternal spirit: that is, not just as man, but as God the Son (9:14).

Through the ritual of Old Testament sacrifices, God revealed the meaning of Christ's atonement. Our approach to God in prayer is not first a question of our preparation to pray; it is a question of Christ's preparation on our behalf. His atonement is an objective transaction. He is the 'propitiation' of our sins; that is, he satisfied the righteous judgment of God against our sin (Heb. 2:17; Rom. 3:25,26). He bore our sins (Heb. 9:28); that is, he bore the punishment due to them. The debt is marked 'paid'; our sins are no more remembered against us (Heb. 10:17). The alienation of sin is overcome; the way is opened into the presence of God (Heb. 9:24; 10:20). The power of sin and Satan is broken; we are redeemed (Heb. 2:14,15).

Christ's offering presented, once for all, the all-sufficient sacrifice for sin. Unlike the Old Testament sacrifices that were repeated, day after day, Christ's sacrifice is unrepeatable (Heb. 7:27; 9:12,27; 10:10–13). Christ has finished his offering of himself: he is no longer the Victim but the Victor, seated in glory at the right hand of God (Heb. 10:12,13). The doctrine of the repetition of the sacrifice of Christ in the 'bloodless sacrifice' of the mass contradicts the Scripture, and intrudes men into an office that only Christ possesses.

d. *His mediatorial ministry*

Our prayer may be addressed to God only through Christ's atonement. But the Lord who died now lives, and now mediates our prayers to God. His ministry is royal: he governs all things, both now and in the world to come (Heb. 2:8). His kingdom, his rule cannot be shaken (12:28; 3:13). We come in confidence to pray, for we know that Christ has the power to accomplish the will of God for our salvation. In prayer we look to Jesus who is not only above us but also before us. We run the race with patience because Jesus has finished his course. He is the Pioneer, the Founder and the Finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2).

As we pray, we have confidence because of the finished work of Christ and his royal glory. But to this is added the joy of knowing that he ever lives to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:25). In the weakness and confusion that often surrounds our praying we take heart in the knowledge that Jesus represents us before the throne of God (Heb. 7:26; 9:24). Charles Wesley voiced that assurance in his hymn:

> Arise, my soul, arise; shake off thy guilty fears
> The bleeding Sacrifice in my behalf appears;
> Before the throne my Surety stands:
> My name is written on his hands.

Because our Representative stands in the sanctuary, we may find our refuge there; our hope is anchored within the veil (Heb. 6:18–20). We pray in awe, knowing that our God is a consuming fire (12:28,29), but we also pray in bold confidence (4:16), for heaven is our refuge. From all the accusations against us we can appeal to our Advocate at the throne of grace.

In the days of his flesh, Jesus prayed with tears (Heb. 5:7,8); we may be sure of his compassion as he leads us through suffering to the joy that is set before us (Heb. 2:17,18; 4:15,16). He ever lives to intercede; there can be no limit to his power to save. As he prayed for his own before his death, so he intercedes now with his Father (John 17).

Jesus who prays for us in heaven also leads our worship on earth. In the midst of the congregation he sings his Father's praise (Heb. 2:12; Ps. 22:22). It is by the Spirit that Christ is present, and by the Spirit that he enables us to pray with him. On the one hand, therefore, we come in prayer and worship to where Jesus is in the midst of the heavenly assembly of the saints and the angels (Heb. 12:22–24). On the other hand, Jesus comes to pray with us as we gather to worship the Father in his name (Heb. 10:25).

B. Prayer in the Spirit

1. The presence of the Spirit

The ministry of Christ, then, is not only in heaven, but in the midst of his people. He is present by his Spirit, sent from the throne. He promised not to leave his disciples orphans, but to come to them (John 14:18). In the coming of Christ by the Spirit we are given a deposit on the final inheritance that is ours (Eph. 1:13,14; 2 Cor. 1:22; Rom. 8:23).

The Holy Spirit makes Christ present to us; he communicates to us the blessings that we receive from Christ. On the one hand, the Spirit is the Giver, the Lord himself who is with us. On the other hand, the Spirit is the Gift: the pledge that we receive of the full blessing that is ours. The power of the Spirit endued the church at Pentecost, ushering in the harvest season of God's redemptive work. Jesus said that it was good that he should go away, in order that the Spirit might come (John 16:7). The work that Christ has done *for* us is not left as a future inheritance. It is accompanied by the work that Christ does *in* us as he gives us his Spirit. In this time of the Spirit we are exhorted to pray in the Spirit (Eph. 6:18). Through the Spirit the rich fellowship of the new covenant becomes our possession and experience.

The figure of the temple as God's dwelling was fulfilled, as we saw, in

Christ. In the incarnation God made his dwelling with men (John 1:14). Christ came to bring us to God, and to bring God to us. By his coming in the Spirit, Christ dwells in us. We are made temples of God by that fact. The Father, too, has come to us in the Spirit (John 14:23); the church is the house of God, made to be a dwelling of God in the Spirit (Eph. 2:20). The saving work of Christ is applied to our hearts by the Spirit (1 Cor. 6:11). The Spirit works to purify us so that individually and in the body of the church we may be a holy temple to the Lord (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19).

Prayer therefore requires consecration. We must present our bodies a living sacrifice to God (Rom. 12:1,2). The church, too, in order to pray to God acceptably, must strive to be holy, and not be defiled by sin (1 Cor. 3:17; 2 Cor. 6:16–7:1).

The immediate presence of the Spirit of the Lord that requires holiness also offers fellowship. The Spirit opens heights and depths of the love of God that the saints can measure only together, clasping, as it were, their outstretched hands (Eph. 3:14–19). Paul prays that the church might be filled with the richness of God himself. That filling comes from knowing the dimensions of the love of Christ. Our knowledge of the indwelling Christ is, in turn, the work of the Spirit. Paul speaks of being filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18), with Christ (1:23), with God (3:19). Together with all the saints we grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ. Filled with the Spirit, the Lord's people speak to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Through the indwelling word of Christ, the Spirit grants wisdom for the praises of the new people of God (Col. 3:16).

Worship in the Spirit together implies individual worship in the Spirit. The Spirit, as the Spirit of Christ, is the Spirit of sonship. By the Spirit we cry 'Abba' (Rom. 8:15,16). The Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are children of God.

Paul also speaks of the intercession of the Spirit for us (Rom. 8:26,27).[36] As Christians endure suffering, waiting for the coming glory, they are reminded that the whole creation is also waiting to be delivered from bondage into the 'liberty of the glory of the children of God' (Rom. 8:21). As the creation waits, it groans. We, too, even though we have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly (8:23). We have the Spirit of adoption, but we have not yet experienced that resurrection glory to which the Spirit leads us. That adoption is still in store. Amazingly, even the Spirit groans (8:26). The groaning of the Spirit takes place as the Spirit makes intercession for us. We are weak, we do not know how to pray as we should. The Spirit comes to our aid, helps our weakness. This weakness does not describe a particular time of depression; rather, it describes our situation in this time while we await the glory to come. Even though we already experience a taste of glory in the fellowship of the Spirit, we still wait with the created order for the day of the Lord. In our weakness, we do not know how to pray according to the will of God. We know that for those who love God all things work together for good. We know that we must pray for God's will to be done and his kingdom to come. But we do not know what God's will is in our immediate situation. In our weakness and suffering we cry out to him for relief, but we do not know how he is leading us, or what will be for our good and his glory.

In our need the Holy Spirit is our Helper. He prays for us, not at the right hand of God, but as the indwelling Spirit of Christ. His prayers are according

to the will of God, for he knows that will perfectly. Yet he prays with us as well as for us. He makes our groaning (cf. v.23) his groaning; by his presence in our hearts he brings his will to expression through the groans of our yearning. Although the groans of the Spirit are inexpressible in the depth of their yearning for us, they communicate effectually with God. God, who searches our hearts, knows the mind of the Spirit expressed in the groanings within us. The intercession of the Spirit is answered as God works all things for our good (v.28).

2. *The gifts of the Spirit*

The Spirit, then, makes Christ present in our hearts, testifies to our adoption, and prays for us with inexpressible groanings. The Spirit also furnishes us with the fruit and gifts of his provision. All the Christian graces bear upon prayer. The love of God poured out in our hearts by the Spirit quickens the response of our love, which is the fruit of the Spirit (Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22). Love for God draws us to seek his face; it kindles our love for others, love that will sustain persevering prayer for them (1 Pet. 4:7,8). The patience of the Spirit sustains prayer without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17). The Spirit who intercedes for us grants us gifts to intercede for one another. The strength of prevailing prayer lies in the faith the Spirit gives (Jas. 5:13–18). Like other spiritual gifts, gifts for prayer are blessed in their exercise. We are struck by the number of people mentioned in Paul's letters as the objects of his prayers. He prayed fervently for others, and asked others to pray for him (Eph. 6:18–20; Col. 4:3; 1 Thess. 5:25).

Wisdom as a gift of the Spirit guides us in praying. To recognise the depth of our need and incapacity, and the groaning of the Spirit on our behalf, is not to deny the blessing of the Spirit in giving us a measure of understanding in the word of Christ. In that wisdom we may sing with one another, praise God together, and pray for one another (Col. 1:9; 3:16). The wisdom that we need to pray aright may itself be prayed for (Jas. 1:5).

3. *Union with Christ in the Spirit*

The work of Christ as the heavenly Mediator guarantees access to the Father's throne for those who are 'in Christ', those whom he represents. But, as we have seen, we are not only in Christ; Christ is in us. That is to say, Christ not only stands in our place, he also dwells in our hearts. Union with Christ is vital as well as representative. It is by the Spirit that Christ comes to us and abides with us (1 John 4:12–16). Jesus gave the Spirit by inbreathing the disciples in the upper room after the resurrection (John 20:22,23). Even before the Spirit was sent from the throne, the disciples were united to Christ by the Spirit of his resurrection.

The fellowship of the Spirit is a sharing in the Spirit; we live by the Spirit of life given to us. We are made 'partakers of the Spirit' and of Christ (Heb. 6:4; 3:14). Peter teaches that God gives us everything we need for life and godliness in order that, through his precious promises, we might participate in the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). J. B. Mayor well asks, 'For what else is it to have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, but to be partakers of the divine nature, a participation promised in answer to prayer?'[37] Mayor also points out that this fellowship in the Spirit must be distinguished from Greek assertions of man's

equality with God, and also from unguarded statements found in Athanasius and other early church fathers.[38] The closeness of fellowship created by the Spirit does not absorb us into deity. We do not lose our identity as God's creatures as we are transformed in likeness to Christ (2 Cor. 3:18). The Spirit continues to witness to our spirits; the distinction remains in even the deepest experience of loving union (Rom. 8:16).

Knowing God, loving God, worshipping God: in this way our union with Christ in the Spirit finds expression. Paul continually prays for the saints that this may be their experience (Eph. 1:17–23; Col. 1:9–11; Phil. 1:9). The Spirit pours out in our hearts the love that God has for us (Rom. 5:5). He causes us to be aware of the infinite dimensions of that measureless love. That awareness yields overwhelming awe and the supreme delight of human existence. It tastes of heaven and the glory to come. Prayer rightly seeks the joy that the presence of the Spirit brings, the knowledge of the Father and the Son. Yet that joy must not be sought in itself. The supreme desire of one in whom the Spirit dwells is the desire that the Spirit gives: the glory of God. The highest aim of prayer is not to experience transports of delight but to bring joy to the Father's heart.

C. Prayer to the Father

1. Prayer to the First Person of the Trinity

Jesus taught his disciples to pray, 'Our Father'. Are we to address all prayer to the Father? May we also pray to Jesus Christ, or to the Holy Spirit? Should we pray to the triune God without disctinction of Persons? Christians are sometimes confused. Paul Tillich argued against the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity from the practice of prayer.[39] Tillich contended that if we address prayer to one of the Persons of the Trinity, distinguishing that person from the others, we are denying the unity of the Godhead. In effect we are worshipping one God of three. On the other hand, if we make no distinction, we are simply praying to God, not to a Trinity.

The New Testament teaches prayer to the Son as well as to the Father.[40] The worship of the whole creation is offered to the Lamb as well as to God in the heavenly scene (Rev. 5:13). To Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess (Phil. 2:9,10; cf. Rom 14:11, where the same worship is ascribed to the Father). 'Lord' (*Kyrios*) is used for the covenant name of God in the Greek Old Testament; that name is applied to Jesus in the New Testament in the context of worship. Stephen's two prayers at his martyrdom are addressed to the Lord Jesus and to the Lord (Acts 7:59,60). Peter does not hesitate to apply to Christ a passage from Isaiah describing in the most intense fashion the worship of God. Isaiah says that God's people are to fear the Lord of Hosts and hallow his name (Isa. 8:13). Peter uses the words of the passage, but inserts *Christ* as Lord (1 Pet. 3:15). The Old Testament phrase 'calling on the name of the Lord' is used where the name of Christ is in view (Acts 9:21). Jesus will do what we ask of him in his name (John 14:14).[41] The disciples are not orphaned; they may still go to the Lord with their requests (John 14:18).

The New Testament does not teach explicitly prayer to the Spirit, but the deity of the Spirit is affirmed, and the Spirit is said to function as our

Advocate (*paraklētos*: John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7; 1 John 2:1). That function in itself makes prayer appropriate: we address One who, like the Son of God, represents us and pleads our cause, our 'case';[42] to pray to the Spirit is to recognise both his deity and his work on our behalf.

Tillich's objection against the doctrine of the Trinity is not sustained by the Christian practice of prayer. Prayer does not remove all the mystery. We cannot explain by analogy to human life how there can be one God while the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are equally God. In prayer, as in theology, we may misconceive the teaching of Scripture and think of the three Persons as three Gods. But prayer, drawing us into communion with God, makes it easier, not harder, to confess the triune God. Calvin writes: 'I am exceedingly pleased with this observation of Gregory of Nazianzen: "I cannot think of the *one*, but I am immediately surrounded with the splendour of the *three*; nor can I clearly discover the *three*, but I am suddenly carried back to the *one*." '[43] Those words of the Cappadocian father reflect experience in prayer and meditation. As we have seen, the very term 'Father' reminds us of the Son in whom the Father is revealed; we know that the cry of sonship issues from the Spirit of adoption. The Spirit of adoption is the Spirit of fatherhood as well as sonship. We experience the reality of sonship as the Spirit makes the Father present with us, and as he unites us with the Son.

2. *Prayer to the Father in the Son through the Spirit*

Paul Tillich's objection must be set aside, but it provides an important warning. Our prayer is always directed to the triune God. We dare not address the Father without awareness of the Son. To do so would be to fail to pray in the name of Jesus. Nor should we pray without recognising that the Lord is present to help us, present in the abiding reality of the Holy Spirit. To be sure, in our weakness and finitude, we may think now of the Father, now of the Son, now of the Spirit. Yet we do sense that our prayer is to the Trinity. The Spirit who makes intercession for us guides our praying, for he witnesses to the Father and to the Son.

Here, too, the Scripture gives sure guidance. Clearly prayer in the New Testament is addressed to the Father. In the teaching of Jesus, in the record of Acts, in the Epistles, Christian believers bow to the Father from whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named (Eph. 3:14). Does this uniform practice ignore or replace prayer to the Trinity? Not at all; rather, it is in addressing the Father that we can best respond to the full revelation of the Trinity. It would be foolish (indeed, blasphemous) to imagine a kind of jealousy within the Trinity, as though the Son would feel slighted by our appeal to the Father. Indeed, such a travesty is in no way possible. We cannot turn our backs to the Son in order to address the Father. The Father will not hear such prayer. Only as we come in the name of the Son can we pray to the Father.

Prayer to the Father is not a limitation of our prayer. It does not exclude Christ, but confesses the purpose for which he gave his life. He came, not only to claim those that the Father had given him, but to bring them to the Father, losing none of them (John 17:12). The triumph of the work of the Son is to make us acceptable to the Father through him (John 16:27).

Prayer to the Father exhibits the consciousness of sonship that crowns

prayer in Christ. The total submission of prayer, its utter trust, looks to Jesus Christ. He is Lord; we come to him with our burden of sin and receive forgiveness and life. Yet when Jesus receives us to himself and unites us to himself we are more than delivered from sin, more than made heirs of eternal life: we are brought into a relation with God the Father that can exist only because Jesus is the divine Son. We are made sons of God. Yes, children by the new birth, but, in a sense, more than children. In Christ there is no longer male and female: we are sons in the Son.

The lessons of prayer all hinge on this incredible reality; we bring to the Father the dedication of our new obedience (Rom. 12:1,2); we recognise his discipline (Heb. 12:5–7); we seek his will, his plan, his kingdom. In the urgency of our helpless need, we come to him with importunity, knowing that our Father will not give us a stone for bread (Luke 11:11–13).

The prayer of sonship to the Father breathes assurance as well as dependence. We realise that the love of the heavenly Father is all our hope. Surprisingly, Paul writes, 'But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us' (Rom. 5:8). Since Paul was speaking of the willingness of a man to give his life for a friend, we should have expected him to write, 'But *Christ* demonstrates his own love . . .' Calvary displays not only the love of the Son who gave himself for us, it demonstrates the love of the Father, who gave his only Son.

All the delight of heaven itself begins in prayer as the Spirit of the Father and of the Son draws us into communion with the triune God. We pray, '*Abba,* Father!' and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3).

PART TWO

Prayer and Spirituality

9

A Christian View of Prayer and Spirituality in Hindu Thought

SUNAND SUMITHRA

I. INTRODUCTION

Prayer is the deepest activity of the human spirit. It satisfies the universal human yearning for direct contact with the Divine. It is found in all religions in various forms, and corresponds to a religion's understanding of God. If God is the end — in both senses of 'meaning' and 'goal' — then man *is* what his prayers are. In whatever way we might define religion, prayer is its heart, and a human being is primarily *homo religiosus*.

This paper endeavours to analyse and assess the Hindu concept of prayer in the light of biblical revelation, and to make certain concrete suggestions particularly for those Christians whose background is, or who are surrounded by, Hindu culture. Accordingly, the study is divided into several parts. In the first three parts an attempt is made to analyse the concept of spirituality in general, and Hindu spirituality and prayer in particular. An evaluation in the light of the Bible constitutes the next part, while in the final part some insights for the renewal and the mission of the church are suggested.

Obviously, for such a study as this, key Hindu Scriptures must be examined.

II. WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?

As the chapter titles of this book suggest, one's concept of prayer is determined by one's understanding of spirituality.[1] In a comparative study such as this it is most difficult if not impossible to decide upon an adequate definition of spirituality, one which will do justice both to the Christian as well as to Hindu presuppositions and commitments. The definition may be so broad that it may be viewed by a Christian (for that matter by a Hindu also) as a concession in order to facilitate discussion. Beyond this, it is necessary to remember that later on when Hindu prayer and spirituality will be evaluated in the light of the Bible we will be briefly describing the nature of Christian spirituality as well, based on biblical truths. Inevitably, one takes a stand; without conviction there is nothing worthwhile to be achieved.

Significantly, the concept of spirituality is a recent one, though the category of 'spirit' is very ancient. The term 'spirituality' was first used in the 17th

century, in French, as *spiritualité*, and that pejoratively: the 'new spirituality' of Madame Guyon (which was really a type of mysticism) was condemned. The increasing backlash against secularism, unprecedented technological progress and theological sterility have contributed to a similar emphasis on spirituality in our times. In fact, in contemporary theological discussions the very category of spirit is under attack. Almost by way of reaction, and in defiance of rising modernism, questions concerning the meaning of human life and the hard fact of death are bringing humankind back to the mysterious in religion.[2]

Many evangelical definitions, such as those that define spirituality as 'the state of deep relationship to God' or as 'the state of being under the control of the Holy Spirit', or as 'the spirit of all the religions', are either too Christian (so that they cannot include other religious spiritualities and thereby facilitate discussion), or too formal.[3]

Wakefield offers a broader definition: spirituality is the sum of 'those attitudes, beliefs and practices which animate people's lives and help them to reach out towards the super-sensible realities'.[4] This definition is not limited to conceptual aspects only but includes also life–styles, and is applicable to religions other than Christianity. Using this definition it is valid to talk about Hindu as well as Christian spirituality, Roman Catholic as well as Protestant or Orthodox spirituality, modern spirituality as well as the spirituality of the Middle Ages, the spirituality of the Incarnation, spirituality for combat, and so on.

This current emphasis on the essential relationship between spirituality and behaviour has historical roots. Following the same instinct as Scholasticism, Protestantism has frequently attempted to jump straight from doctrine to action, often without the mediation of God's grace acquired through prayer. As Richard Lovelace says, 'we suffer a santification gap', a gap between faith and works, theology and ethics, resulting from a lack of clear pastoral instruction showing how to bring the whole of one's life in the world into progressive conformity with the will of God.[5] One can go even further, as Lovelace observes, and affirm that this sanctification gap is now manifesting itself in the fragmentation of contemporary Protestantism. Here James M. Houston's analysis is very relevant:

> [We] seem to be standing at the third major crossroads of reform in Christian history: the first, in reaction to Constantine's worldly imperial church was *the rise of monasticism*. Then at the Reformation, *God was seen to call not just the select few but every Christian to a holy life.* Are we now on the threshold of a third breakthrough, *in our spiritual hunger for more authentic Christian life?*[6]

This new interest in spirituality, observes Houston, is also

> breaking down the differences between Christian traditions. Evangelical Christians, for example, are becoming more aware of the whole communion of saints throughout the Christian centuries. They also see the need for a spiritual life that spills over to the poor and down-trodden. Setting our minds on God's kingdom requires more than feeding our own soul.[7]

Since both in the Roman Catholic and in the Orthodox churches there are styles of spirituality that undergird theology and action, it is appropriate that

this sanctification gap is also called the 'Protestant gap'![8] We must return to the earlier divines who spoke of three levels of theology, namely, dogmatic, spiritual and moral corresponding to the conceptual, spiritual and ethical dimensions of human life.

Since human beings are composed of both body and spirit,[9] at least three issues are involved when we talk about spirituality: (1) the relationship between bodily and spiritual life; (2) the meaning of life in the body as it is, transitory and corruptible; and (3) the goal of life in the body. In the light of this, we are safe to describe spirituality as the sum of our beliefs and conduct, which gives meaning to our bodily existence by affirming goals beyond it. Such a definition, though valuable for the purposes of our comparative study, is obviously too broad: theoretically this formula could include the whole of human life and culture! From a Christian point of view this definition could be seen as merely a container into which the contents of Christian spirituality — such as the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, total allegiance to the lordship of Jesus Christ, and unquestioning acceptance of the supreme authority of the Scriptures — need to be supplied to be meaningful. But we will take such steps later.

III. HINDU SPIRITUALITY

More than any other country, India has exported spirituality, and that more than any other commodity. That is why Robin Boyd calls Hinduism the third great and final confrontation for Christianity (the first two being Judaism and Islam).[10]

Spirituality (*adhyatmikta*)[11] is a word frequently used in Hindu circles, especially Gandhian ones, and is sometimes brought forward as the basis for common ground in dialogue. There are several ways to describe Hindu spirituality. William Stewart summarises Hindu spirituality in terms of three main convictions: (1) that different religious convictions are paths to the same goal, which is a common centre for our worship and adoration; (2) that self-realisation is the supremely worthy goal of human beings; (3) that India, the land of *sanathana dharma* ('the eternal religion') is the custodian of the spiritual message for the world.[12] He observes that the three movements of *sarvodaya* (awakening/uplift for all), the Ramakrishna Movement as well as the philosophical renaissance of Sarvapally Radhakrishnan epitomise modern Hindu spirituality.

Briefly put, the Hindu understanding of spirituality, *adhyatmikta,* can be divided for convenience into three categories. In the *first,* there is a preference for the non-material aspects of life. 'The things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are unseen are eternal,' wrote St. Paul. To the West this is a hard saying, even if we admit its truth theoretically. To India it is a truism. We will find in India almost every type of religion and philosophy that the world has ever produced, but a system of blank materialism you will not find. That is a creed too self-evidently foolish to need refutation. For as Rabindranath Tagore has said, an Indian is 'incurably religious'. Spirit is for him the great reality, and all the common acts of life are sacraments. The highest virtue lies in despising this world and existence in it. This tradition, it must be said, runs right through the religious history of this country. This

basic tradition of negation of the material existence places its accent on the mystical experience of the holy man whose inner life is shrouded in mystery.

This spirituality can take many forms.

(1) The extreme form is to deny materiality either because it is evil, or an illusion (*maya*). Gandhian spirituality can be mentioned as an example of this type. Gandhi defined God only in terms of truth (not only 'God is truth', but 'Truth is God'), which is the nearest Gandhi could come to the Vedantic assertion, that only the Brahman is the real. His practice of *satyagraha* (literally 'striving after truth', but the term also means the sufferings of self-denial caused by such a striving), and the matching of his spiritual force with the physical force appied by the British, reveals such a spirituality. He taught people to endure all physical suffering in achieving truth. Thus, one is expected so to live that the material aspects are mortified. Hence this way is called *sanyasa* ('ascetic') spirituality: 'renouncing all actions by thought and self-control, the embodied one rests happily in the nine-gated city, neither at all acting nor causing to act' (*Bhagavad Gita*: Discourse V, *Shloka* 13). Renunciation of bodily existence and its demands is its essence. Such a renunciation of the world is not found in the *Vedas* but in the later *Upanishads*. The Vedantic Monism asserted that the self is unaffected by all life activities. The doctrine of *maya*, that this world as other than Brahman is illusion, also contributed to the belief that what happens in physical life in the body is *maya*, i.e. it is passing and is not eternal or real.

(2) A milder form of the above is *bhakti* ('loving devotion') spirituality. Here, life is to be so lived that it satisfies one's *ishtadevata* ('god of one's choice', 'favourite god'). All other considerations other than pleasing this god are secondary. God is accepted as a person and personal attachment to him/her is encouraged. This attachment must be a total commitment to him/her. 'Those who, fixing their thoughts on me contemplate me, always devout, endued with supreme faith, those in my opinion are the best yogins' (*Gita* XII, 2). The term *bhakti* means 'faith, and yet more than faith; it means devotion, and yet is deeper than devotion; it expresses following another, and yet is richer than that. It means Self committed to Another — an utter self-abandonment until that Other becomes the life of our life, the very centre of our being'.[13]

(3) A third form, *gnana* (wisdom, knowledge) spirituality, also strives toward an immaterial destiny. But here the divine is not a person. There is a detachment from the world, but one's concentration is on the Divine, the Infinite. 'Having abandoned attachment for the fruits of action, ever content, dependent on none, though engaged in actions, nothing at all they do' (*Gita*, IV, 20). Further, *dhyana* (meditation) *yoga* falls between *gnana* and *bhakti yoga*: 'serene minded, fearless, firm in the vow of godly life, having restrained the mind, thinking on me and balanced, let him sit looking up to me as the Supreme' (*Gita* VI, 14).

The *second* category emphasises materiality in preference to the spiritual. This also can take several forms:

(1) *Karma* (work, action) spirituality. Here the spiritual goals can be influenced by what one does in one's bodily existence, either for good or for bad. Spiritual salvation can be affected by physical actions. 'Having regard to thy known duty also, thou oughtest not to waver. For, to a *Kshatriya*, there is nothing more wholesome than a lawful battle. Happy *Kshatriya*, O Son of

Pritha, find such a battle as this come of itself an open door to heaven. Now if thou wouldst not fight this lawful battle, then having abandoned thine own duty, and fame, thou shalt incur sin' (*Gita* II, 31–33).

Karma, in Christian terms justification by works, has been there from the very beginning of religious thought in India. It teaches that the human being is a composite of mind and body, capable of action and reactions. When a person dies, his or her *karma* (here, the fruit of his or her deeds) follows on. This is the foundation of the reincarnation of souls into various forms of life. As are one's acts, so does one conduct oneself and so does one become. Desire manifests itself in action and action determines the course of life. One becomes good by good actions and bad by bad actions. This evolving process of life and death continues until *mukti* ('salvation' or 'liberation') is attained by an overwhelming balance of good deeds. There is no room for new being, it is only a matter of new doings and new becoming.

(2) In *tantra* ('plan', or even 'trick'!) spirituality, spiritual goals can be achieved or manipulated through the medium of the material — for example, through certain physical activities. The tantric spirituality is the creation of the *shaktas,* those who worship the female deity of *Shakti* or *Parvati,* the wife of *Shiva* (hence also called *Shaktism*). Tantrism is a combination of *gnana* and *karma* practices. The heart of tantrism is the waking up of the dormant *kundalini* which is the divine energy coiled inside the body of a human being.

(3) In the *Yantra* ('machine', 'tool') form of spirituality (which is similar to *tantra*), spiritual goals are achieved through the efficacy of certain mysterious maps and diagrams and configurations.

(4) Magic. Here the spiritual can be totally determined by material manipulation. The *Atharva Veda,* which is the fourth *veda,* contains primarily utterances which are used in the performance of magical rites. Here there are incantations to be directed against 'whom I hate and who hate me', incantations for obtaining children, prolonging life, dispelling the effect of evil magic, guarding against poison, diseases and other ills; even for doing harm to others.

The *third* category of Hindu spirituality emphasises neither the spiritual nor the material, but its primary goal is to conform to *'rita'*, the eternal order of things: *'rita* is the established root of the world, of the sun, moon, and stars, morning and evening, day and night' (*Rigveda*, Book I Hymn 8: verse 1). In modern times *dharma* replaces *rita* (see below). Through such conformity man finds meaning in this life. This also can take several forms:

(1) Ritualism. There is a given set of sacrificial laws, and by meticulously obeying them one's eternal salvation or goal can be altered. It is very significant that after the *Vedasamhitas*, the next stage of development is the development of *Brahmanas* which are really the ritual utterances for the priest and the sacrificer at the time of sacrifice.[14] A close study of the *Brahmanas* will show that the fresh and simple *Rigvedic* religion was substituted by a cold, rigid and artificial form of ritual. The religious spirit recedes into the background while its external forms assume great importance. The priestly class of *Brahmans* became the absolute rulers of religion and society; thus also did sacrifice become the central part of religion, so much so that even gods to whom the sacrifices were offered were not capable of working against them. This was a time when extraordinary importance was given to liturgical functions and external ceremonies of religion. Thus a pious

or a spiritual Hindu comes to be thought of as one who conscientiously performs the required rituals: the doing of the *sandhyvandan* (the evening prayers), the *pujas* (worship of idols) required at different festivals, the recital of certain *mantras* (chants) at specific times, maintaining ritual cleanliness and holy times and seasons, and so on. *Brahmanas* become actual prayer manuals or hand-books used by the *Brahmans* in their religious or ritual worship.

(2) *Dharma* or duty.[15] *Dharma* is essentially sociological: to attain salvation each person must perform the duty of the caste in which he or she is born. Similar as it is to ritualism, it constitutes a second form of Hindu spirituality of conformation. This comes to its apogee especially in the *Gita,* where Krishna teaches Arjuna that doing one's duty is the essence of true religion.[16] But since duty is different for different people according to the castes into which they are born, in the end *Gita* – spirituality turns into the sociology of castes.

(3) *Yoga* or practice. A *yogin* is one who achieves certain goals by his perseverance, by constant exercise. As such, this approach assumes that human beings are capable of achieving perfection.[17] *Yoga* spirituality can scarcely be distinguished from the *rasa yoga* school, with its eight steps of yogic meditation. Such practices are based on the ancient Hindu understanding of physiognomy, according to which certain physico-spiritual essences must be encouraged to rise from below the navel to the upper portion of one's anatomy in order to gain an ascetic and mystic purification. *Yoga* is thus an ascetic and mystic discipline, aiming at purification of the body, mind and soul, thereby preparing them for their ultimate liberation or salvation. The last stage of *samadhi* ('trance') is a completely mystical experience.

Patanjali, whose *yoga sutra* ('formulae') have been and remain a key classical source for all *yoga* systems, gives a very basic definition of *yoga* in his first *sutra*: 'yoga is the silencing of the stream of consciousness'. In *yoga,* not only the human being but the whole of reality is understood as a physico–spiritual continuum, a universal ecological organism which is to be integrated and preserved. As such Michael Von Bruck defines yoga as 'nothing but the leading of the whole man into total silence so that he becomes able to *listen* authentically . . . Yoga is the preparation for perfect spiritual receptivity.'[18]

IV. THE HINDU CONCEPT OR PRAYER OF BRAHMAN[19]

As there is a variety of Hindu spiritualities, or systems of philosophical schools or sects, it is to be expected that there will be also a variety of Hindu concepts of prayer. But the crucial questions are: What is distinctive about the Hindu understanding of prayer? And what is the Hindu experience of it? Here we must necessarily begin with the *Rigveda*.[20] It is very important to note that in Das Gupta's *History of Indian Philosophy*, perhaps the most authentic record of Indian philosophy in existence, prayer is not even discussed.

What kinds of prayers do *Rigvedic* hymns contain? Most of the hymns are prayers addressed to different deities: *Agni, Vayu, Indra, Varuna, Mitra, Asvins, Saravati, Maruts, Soma, Brahamanaspati, Pusa, Usas, Surya, Viswadevas, Rbbhus, Rudra, Rati* and scores of others. These prayers are in the form of praise, invocations of deities who are the personifications of the

natural powers and natural phenomena. But it should be noted that the Vedic seers went behind those manifestations of nature and discerned beyond them the powerful agents of divinities called by the names of the same phenomena. The very first hymn runs thus:

> I laud *Agni*, the chosen Priest, God, minister of sacrifice, the *hotar*, lavisher of wealth. Worthy is *Agni* to be praised by the living as by ancient seers. He shall bring hitherward the Gods. . . To thee, dispeller of the night, O *Agni*, day by day with prayer bringing thee reverence, we come.
>
> (*Rigveda*, Book I, Hymn 1, Mantra 1,2,7).

The petitions in the hymns are 'accept our songs', 'Sarasvati, accept our rite', 'Come thou, to our libations, drinker of *Soma*', 'our chants of praise have strengthened thee, O *Satakratu* and our lauds strengthen thee by the songs we sing', 'O *Indra*, thou who lovest song, let no man hurt our bodies, keep slaughter far from us, for thou canst'. A good many of them are also petitions for preservation: *e.g.* 'If any wolf or robber fain would harm us, therefrom, O *Varuna*, give thou us protection' (*Rigveda* II, 28:10). There are petitions for welfare (I. 19:8; I, 21:1; I. 64:15; etc.); for rain (I, 76; III, 1:14); for health (I, 10:11; I, 50:11; etc.); for sons (I, 64:14; IV, 56:7; VII, 34:20). The majority of the *Rigvedic* petitions are not for spiritual blessings but for health, happiness, long life, wisdom, fame, wives, success in battle, rain, victory in a race, eloquence, destruction of enemies and the like.

There are also petitions for harming the enemy: 'O *Agni*, radiant One, to whom the holy oil is poured, burn up our enemies whom fiends protect' (*Rigveda* I, 12:5). 'Destroy this ass, O *Indra*, who in tones discordant brays to thee. . . Slay each reviler, and destroy him who in secret injures us' (*Rigveda* I, 29:5 & 7).

There are also petitions specifically for the removal of sin. 'Whatever sin is found in me, whatever evil I have wrought. If I have lied or falsely sworn, Waters [name of the god!], remove it far from me' (I, 23:22). There is hardly any petition which expresses the repentance of the singer/devotee. Occasionally, there is a confession. 'Whatever law of thine, O God, O *Varuna*, as we are men, day after day we violate. Give us not as a prey to death, to be destroyed by thee in wrath, to thy fierce anger when displeased' (I, 25:1,2). 'Pardon, we pray, this sin of ours, O *Agni*, — the path which we have trodden, widely straying, dear friend and Father, caring for the pious, who speedest nigh and who inspirest mortals' (I, 31:16). Interestingly, there are also prayers for removal of punishment on 'us' for the sins which are committed by others: 'punish us not for a false brother's trespass. Let us not feel the might of friend or foeman' (IV, 3:13). (X, 59:1–4): There are prayers also to *Nirrti* the deity of sin (X, 59:1–4): 'His life hath been renewed and carried forward as two men, car-borne, by the skilful driver. One falls, then seeks the goal with quickened vigour. Let *Nirrti* depart to distant places.' Here is the psalm for wealth, and food, in plenty: '. . . let us do many deeds to bring us glory. All these deeds the singer hath considered. Let *Nirrti* depart to distant places. May we o'ercome our foes with acts of valour, as heaven is over earth, hills over lowlands. All these deed the singer hath considered. Let *Nirrti* depart to distant places. Give us not up as prey to death, O *Soma*: still let us look upon the Sun arising. Let our old age with passing days be kindly. Let *Nirrti* depart

to distant places.' 'Far from us, far away drive thou Destruction. Put from us e'en the sin we have committed' (I, 24:9). Here sin is personified.

There is also a prayer addressed to food, praising it. 'Now will I glorify Food that upholds great strength, by whose invigorating power Trita rent Vrtra limb from limb. O pleasant Food, O Food of meat, thee have we chosen for our own, so be our kind protector thou. Come hitherward to us, O Food, auspicious with auspicious help, health-bringing, not unkind, a dear guileless friend' (I, 187:1–3). Another prayer is addressed to the horse (I, 162 & 163); yet others to pleasure (I, 179); to Dawn (III, 61 etc.); to cows (VI, 28); to weapons (VI, 75); to rice and agriculture (X,34); to sacrifices (X, 60); to sin (X, 59); to spirit (X, 58); to the falcon (IV, 27); to grass (I, 191).

One of the most spiritual prayers is this:

> Free us from sins committed by our fathers, from those wherein we have ourselves offended. O king, loose, like a thief who feeds the cattle, as from the calf, set free *Vasistha*. Not our own will betrayed us, but seduction, thoughtlessness, *Varuna*! wine, dice, or anger. The old is near to lead astray the younger: even sleep removeth not all evil-doing. Slavelike may I do service to the Bounteous, serve free from sin the God inclined to anger. This gentle Lord gives wisdom to the simple: the wiser God leads on the wise to riches. O Lord, O *Varuna*, may this laudation come close to thee and lie within thy spirit. May it be well with us in rest and labour. Preserve us ever-more, ye Gods, with blessings. (VII, 86:5–8).

There are also many prayers which are more like wishes. 'May I attain to that his well-loved mansion where men devoted to the Gods are happy' (I, 154:5). 'May *Mitra, Aryaman*, and Bhaga hear us, the mighty *Varuna Daksa*, and *Amsa* . . . May I, *Adityas*, share in this your favour which, *Aryaman*, brings profit e'en in danger' (II, 27:1 & 5). There is a little of that fervent devotion that rings through the verses of the poets of the later sects whose religion from beginning to end is characterised by devotion.

Clayton rightly says, 'The prayers in the Vedas became merely formal repitition in Vedic times. But they had become so even in the days when they were collected in the *Rigveda*. But they had once been the real utterances of the needs of living men in a strange world.'[21]

The typical prayer of a contemporary Hindu now runs: *Om namo bhagavathi vasudeva Om* = 'Reverence to the adorable *vasudeva* (Krishna)'. It is a *mantra* (chant) sung to the praise of Krishna. Replacing Shiva, the Shaivists say, *Shivaya nama* ('Reverence to Shiva'). The Vallabhacharis pray, *Shri Krishnam sharanam mama* ('Holy Krishna is my refuge').

What is more important is that the Aryans had a firm conviction of the power of the *rightly pronounced* prayer. This appears in the way which the gods are addressed in the hymns. As a more elaborate system of Brahmanic Hinduism developed, a complete science of the mysterious values of the various metres used in the hymns was formulated. It is the right pronouncement of the word which effects the spiritual birth of the sacrificer, produces blessings, or even curses the enemy. Such an influence was understood to lie mainly in the metre of the verse. Each metre is specially influential in securing a particular blessing. Altogether in the *Rigveda,* sixty types of metre are used. Of these, the *Gayathri* metre (three lines of eight syllables each) is the most sacred and it expresses the idea of Brahman. One who wishes sacred

knowledge must use it. He who desires strength must use the meter *Trishtubh* (four lines, twelve syllables), he who desires heaven, *Anushtubh* (four lines of eight syllables each), he who desires cattle, *Jagati* (four lines of twelve syllables each), he who wishes long life, *Ushnih* (three lines of eight, eight, and twelve syllables respectively). For this reason *Rigveda* can say that worship has power over all gods.

Even today, every Brahmin repeats these *mantras* every day, and believes they will have effect *ex opere operato*. That is why the word *mantra* in most of the Indian languages also means 'magic'. How important this form of prayer is to Hindus is seen by the preservation of the Vedas from generation to generation. Even in this electronic age, the Brahmins still follow the ancient method of memorising the Vedas, and passing it on to the next generation as an oral tradition. But the amazing fact is that in the recitation of the *mantras*, by Brahmins in Kashmir or Kerala, in Bengal or in Gujerat, there is no change whatever in the spelling, pronunciation, intonation, accent and rhythm of incantation in any of the 1028 hymns or over 74,000 verses (in the *Rigveda* only!), except, it is claimed, in the case of two words! And the way the Vedic *mantras* are now chanted is exactly the same as the way they were chanted 3,000 years ago! The significance here is that the *way* the incantation is performed is far more important in the sacrifices than what is uttered and why it is uttered. This is why much prayer is viewed as recitation for worship.[22]

This coercive power of prayer by repetition has two other forms, *japa* and *tapas*. Just as the Vedic *mantras* were faithfully and meticulously chanted, in the *Bhakti* tradition especially the names of the gods, particularly *Rama* or *Krishna*, are repeated. Even *rudrakshimalas* (prayer beads for counting the number of prayers, made up of the fruits of a tree called *Rudrakashi*) or other forms of keeping count were created. Muttering the name of a god again and again makes one holy, even brings salvation and spiritual blessings. *Vishnu* is supposed to have fought and ultimately destroyed two demons with his *mantra* energy.

Tapas means heat, burning, and so by derivation penance, austerity or vigorous 'fervour'. *Tapas* also moves gods, especially *Yama*, the god of death: 'Yea, the first followers of Law, Law's pure and holy strengtheners, the Fathers, *Yama*! Fervour-moved, — even to those let him depart. Skilled in a thousand ways and means, the sages who protect the Sun, the *Risis, Yama*! Fervour-moved, — even to those let him depart' (X,154,4 and 5). In the last but one hymn, fervour is so exalted that it becomes the creator of the eternal law: 'From Fervour kindled to its height Eternal Law and Truth were born: Thence was the Night produced, and thence the billowy flood of sea arose' (X, 190:1).

Tapas is the extraordinary effort of penance in order to win a complete mastery over oneself and over the supposed unlimited hidden energy that is stored in the unconscious vital part of a being. In most cases, *tapas* is done over a very long period of time, sometimes over years or even decades. The concentration of the mind is supposed to have power to produce fire in the world, and the immobility of the body makes it insensitive to physical stimuli or wounds. *Tapas* is mostly done by those who are in the *sanyas ashrama* since they have taken to an ascetic style of life. The main element in *tapas,* for our purpose, is that it is an importunate prayer which in the end always produces

the fruits desired, because it is offered in the required way. Most of the time the *tapas* is a silent meditation.

The next form of prayer, namely *bhakti*, is said by the *Gita* to be the best way to attain salvation. The term *bhakti* refers to the expression of one's intense love for one's god both in songs of praise and in petitions, as well as in rituals, dance, prayer, activities and even life-style. Bishop Appasamy says, 'Roughly two-thirds of the adherents of Hinduism or over half the population of India may be said to be followers of the path of *bhakti*.'[23] *Bhakti* also shows how other forms of prayer have not satisfied the longing of the Hindu devotee.

Among the devotees who have used the *bhakti* type of prayer are the well-known Tamil *Vaishnava* poets, called *Alvars*, who lived between the 6th and the 8th century A.D.[24] One example will suffice.

> I have been a robber and done many an evil, I have strayed farther and farther, as my mind listed; yet now, I am purged of all dross. The grace of the Lord has come in a flash and enveloped me. I am set on the road to salvation! My heart is melting and my voice is aquiver! With tears of joy streaming down my limbs, the livelong day and night, I shall call out the Name of the Lord — NARAYANA.[25]

The element of confession, conversion, the grace of the Lord, repentance, are all Christian categories that can be found in *bhakti* poets. A longing for the divine fellowship is the chief characteristic of the literature. It is a 'personal' relationship, illustrated largely by the imagery of man and wife. Manicka-vacakar the *Shaiva* poet brings out these elements very clearly:

> Lest I should go astray, He laid His hand on me!
> As I was before the unwearied fire
> With melting soul I worshipped, wept, and bent myself,
> Danced, cried aloud, and sang, and prayed;
> They say: 'The tooth of elephant and woman's grasp relax not',
> So I with love, real, intermitting never,
> Was pierced as a wedge driven into a soft young tree.
> All tears, I like the refluent sea
> Was tossed; Soul was subdued, and body quivered with delight.[26]

Ramanuja (12th century) seems to have summed up many of these elements of *bhakti* in a systematic form.

> Bhakti is the conclusion reached by the passages in the Upanishads that meditation is the means of attaining the Supreme One only when it reaches the state of love. 'Knowing Him only, one goes beyond morality.' Thus knowing Him, one becomes immortal here.[27]

Further, Ramanuja observes that man ought to adore God solely with a view to pleasing him. There is no ulterior object except that of worship itself. Petition is a prayer of low type, while *bhakti* is the higher.

Several Hindu Scriptures praise *bhakti* as the best way to salvation. The *Bhagavatpurana* says that *bhakti* is better than penances (*tapas*), *yoga,* learning (*gnana*) and good deeds (*karma*).[28] Madhwa says, '*Bhakti* is love; that Love for God which is generated from the true knowledge of the greatness of God; that Love which is unshakeable and which is greater than the love the *Bhakta* has for any other thing.'[29]

It is clear that *Bhakti yoga* is a protest against ritualism and even against the immanence of God, and has made prayer a communion with God. Having found 'bliss' in the presence of the Lord, *bhakti* also abolished the caste system which cannot be tolerated in God's presence. Appasamy says that Hindu *bhakti* can be accepted by Christians, provided affirmative answers can be given to the following three questions: 'What do the devotees say about their own experience? Are their lives consistent with their claims? Have they contributed to men's spiritual and moral uplift?'

Another form of Hindu prayer is sacrifice. Though in the Vedic times sacrifice was understood as more or less a gift offering intended to attract the attention and goodwill of the gods, and even to propitiate them in order to find their favour, in the later Brahmanic period such an idea seems to have quickly degenerated; sacrifice regained its power as efficacious in itself. Though it had the mystical potency of producing the desired effect, Das Gupta observes that it was not propitiatory. It was replaced by meditation after the Brahmanic period.

V. HINDU PRAYER AND SPIRITUALITY IN THE LIGHT OF THE BIBLE

Although we necessarily find contradictions between Christian and Hindu concepts of prayer it is nevertheless profitable to put them side by side in order to gain deeper insights into both. We can say several things by way of evaluation of Hindu spirituality and prayer in the light of the Bible.

(1) 'In the world but not of the world' sums up New Testament spirituality. In such a paradoxical approach to the world (affirming it because it is God's creation, yet at the same time rejecting it because in the Fall the whole of creation is in rebellion against God) the early church strongly resisted the gnostic devaluation of the body, which is akin to the Hindu approach. The consequence was that the resurrection of the body became a fundamental Christian belief on the basis of the resurrection of Jesus himself. As a result, any kind of *maya* (illusory) understanding of this world or the physical body is excluded. Hence, not renunciation, *sanyasa*, but involvement, fellowship and worship inside the church and proclamation and service outside the church lie at the core of Christian spirituality.

(2) Paul's insistence that the world cannot know God by wisdom since there is a worm eating at the very basis of human wisdom, and Jesus' teaching that only through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit can one be led into all the truth, prevent a Christian from depending upon his or her own capabilities. Reflection on the revealed Word of God, the Bible, through the help of the Holy Spirit, resulting in the obedience of faith and conduct — all this is a far cry from the *gnana* (wisdom) spirituality, of squeezing out drops of truth through concentrated contemplation. Primarily, man stands in need of grace and not *gnana*.

(3) As far as *bhakti* (love) spirituality is concerned, the stress on God as a person and on the need for God's grace, the sense of sinfulness in need of forgiveness and total abandonment to God in love — all these aspects of the *bhakti marga* ('the way of devtion') have made people like Bishop Appasamy see points of contact between Hindu and Christian spirituality in these areas. To a great extent this is true. But the difference is that the God of the Bible is not only a person with whom one can have direct, intimate contact; he is also

the holy, eternal and creator God. The unbridgeable gap between God and me is a missing perspective in *bhakti* spirituality. God is not only love, but he is also holy. For the Christian, the cross is the place where God's holiness and his grace meet. Further, as Appaswamy has shown in his book, *bhakti* prayers sometimes tend to a monistic type of union with God, whereas New Testament spirituality always keeps that contact with God at the level of communion, keeping the personalities of both God and man distinct and respectively intact. The goal of Christian spirituality cannot be identification with God but must be rather the glorification of God.

(4) Paul warns in Galatians 6:7, 'Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.' This is formally and precisely equivalent to the *karma* doctrine: the fruit of my actions will not leave me. If the Bible said only this, then the concept of *karma* would be fully biblical. But the Bible goes one step further. For we reap not only what we sow, but also what others sow. Not only do the children reap what the parents have sown; but the sinners also reap what sinless Jesus has sown. Whether we like it or not, each one of us inevitably influences others. The initiative of God and the doctrine of grace for the salvation of man is a biblical teaching missing in the *bhakti* spirituality. The Bible unambiguously affirms that in himself, a man is incapable of achieving anything worthwhile in the spiritual realm. All our righteousness is like filthy rags before God. We therefore depend on the merit (*karma*) of another.

(5) As noted earlier, unless a person is enlightened, energised and motivated through the Holy Spirit, he or she cannot achieve anything of ultimate, eternal value. This is not to deny that the gifts of common grace enable men and women from every religious quarter to perform astonishingly good deeds. But if Paul is quite clear that Christ is the abrogation of even Jewish ritual law, it is impossible for Christians to think that Hindu sacrifices and worship rituals remain efficacious before God. The New Testament demands not so much outward ritual piety as inward transformation — of the heart and character. God rewards that spirituality which is found in the cave of the heart and is lived out.

(6) In response to *dharma* spirituality, which sees the duty of man as the foremost virtue, justification by faith alone is the Christian concept. The New Testament teaches, if we may put it so, that believing in Jesus Christ is the primary duty (*dharma*)!

In the light of the above evaluation, we are now better placed to assess Hindu prayers in the light of the Christian revelation:

(1) Since the Bible teaches that man does what he is, and not the other way around (as the *karma* or the *dharma* spirituality teaches), any mechanical repetition of God's name is no prayer in Christian churches. It is true that the Lord's prayer and many other ancient creeds and liturgies have the tendency to become mechanical, but they are still a far cry from the repetitive method which is judged efficacious by the very repetition. The inward heart attitude rather than the outward act of prayer is what pleases the Lord.

(2) The biblical understanding of prayer involves a willing submission to God. The supreme example is that of our Lord Jesus when he cried in Gethsemane, 'Yet not what I will, but what you will'. That is the criterion of all Christian praying. This is one reason why we end our prayers 'in Jesus' name'. Christian prayers give God a right to say 'No' to our prayers. In

contrast the Hindu form of *tapas* or *mantra* prayers attempts to compel the deity to do what the praying worshipper wants, not what the deity wants. This material (as against personal) approach in Hindu prayer thus turns prayer into a means to fulfil one's own desire uninhibitedly. The self-sufficient *yoga* exercises with perfection as their goal are unacceptable to Christians for a similar reason. Since we do not know how to pray without the help of the Holy Spirit, a Christian is not a *yogin* in the strict sense of the term; rather, he or she is a child of the Almighty, the all-wise, heavenly Father.

(3) The model prayer that Jesus taught, the 'Our Father . . .', contains another unique element of Christian prayer. Unlike the Hindu concept of 'alone with the Alone', Christian prayer is often corporate. Not only do we pray *for* one another, but also *with* one another, since the promise is, 'where two or three come together in my name . . .' (Mt. 18:20), and, '[If] two of you on earth agree about anything' (Mt. 18:19). The concept of the church is necessary not just for liturgical prayers, but even for the very essence of prayer. This is why fellowship is a very key element in prayer for Christians.

(4) The primary difference between the Hindu and the Christian concepts of prayer lies in their respective doctrines of God. Prayers in the Bible concentrate not so much on what we do as what God has already done for us. God is more anxious to listen to my prayers than I am to pray! Recitation of biblical passages like *mantras* has never been an accepted form of prayer in the history of the church.

One great element found in Christian prayers but lacking in Hindu prayers is the element of thanksgiving. Since thanksgiving provides very real evidence of personal fellowship between God and the devotee, lack of it betrays the inadequacy of a personal, moral relationship with God. Says Stephen Neill, 'Readers of the Rigveda have been struck by the almost total absence of anything that could be called a personal relationship between the worshipper and the object of his worship.'[30] They demonstrate rather an ontological relationship. For the same reason, even confession and repentance are hardly found among *Rigvedic* prayers. All this means that 'Lord, have mercy on me' lies at the core of Christian prayer, and not 'May I become rich, O *Indra*, by thy favour'.

V. CONCLUSION

Let me make a couple of suggestions by way of conclusion.

A. Prayer: To a Holy God

The Hindu postulate that self-negation is god-affirmation is yet to be proved; from the Christian perspective, the opposite is closer to the truth. Actually in most cases renunciation has meant self-affirmation. It is like the yogi in the Himalayas who uttered these first words, when a visitor contacted him after many years: 'You know, I have not seen a woman for thirty years!' In this respect, *bhakti* spirituality is nearer the kingdom of God than the *sanyasa* spirituality. What both the approaches lack is the element of communion with God. If *sanyasa* spirituality is self-affirmation in the very act of concentrating on the self to renounce it, *bhakti*, though often unwittingly, turns communion into union, and hence returns to the concentration on the self.

The failure to recognise the holiness of God is the great lack here. Generally speaking, it is hard for Indian Christians to take the holiness of God seriously in their everyday life. The need is to develop individual habits of prayer, which reflect not only easy access to God because he is loving and forgiving, but also the majesty, the greatness and the glory of God as the holy One. We dare not come to God unprepared, this God who is of holier eyes than to behold evil! This God is a consuming fire. That it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God cannot be repeated too often in India. Right from the *Rigvedic* times, this unbridgeable gap between God and man is not to be found in any Hindu Scriptures or experience.

If we believe God is holy, then inevitably our prayers will be sincere and disciplined. Our pastors must portray God's holiness in their prayers, for only then will they have a lasting impact on the lives of those in the congregations.

It is true, as many authors have affirmed, that Christian spirituality can learn many things from the spiritualities of others, for non-Christian spiritualities do not 'start from scratch'. But it is also true that in every step of indigenisation, there is a potent danger of syncretism. In the process of borrowing 'from the riches of the nations', it is the doctrine of the holiness of God which becomes the crucial touch-stone. The use of *yoga*, transcendental meditation, Upanishads and Vedas in Christian worship — all these dilute the holiness of God, for these steps attempt to reconcile basically incompatible elements. No doubt the Western tradition also stands in need of purging; but indigenisation for its own sake is obviously self-defeating.

Our prayer habits must also include, beyond mere supplication, elements of praise, blessing and thanksgiving. This again is the result of one's grasp of the holiness of God. Not just in corporate prayers only, but also in individual prayers we Indian Christians need to cultivate the habit of spending more of our prayer time in adoring the triune God.

B. Prayer: In Fellowship with Other Christians

Generally speaking, the Indian mind is both ahistorical (owing to the Hindu doctrines of *karma samsara* and *punarjanma,* depicting an endless cycle of births), and focused on the individual (owing to the Vedantic idea of 'alone with alone' or self-realisation). This cuts the nerve of healthy prayer meetings in the church. Though it is heartening to see more and more Christians relating themselves more zealously to the activities of the church, the average church member's relationship with the church is often nominal. In most cases where there is a sense of solidarity with the church, it is actually a sociological solidarity with people of the same caste, language or the like. Unlike Korea, where Christians are accused of living for the church, in India we need to relearn the truth that the church is bound up with the essence of the gospel. A recent consultation by the Theological Commission of the Evangelical Fellowship of India on the theme of 'Christian identity' revealed that, more often than not, Indian Christians lack such a sense of 'belongingness' to the church.

Our praying together ought to mean that we pray both *as* a church and as individuals *for* the church, not just for the needs of individual members. We need to remember the Reformation principle of the priesthood of all believers in our church life. Indian Christians, following the Hindu idea of priesthood, commonly think that praying is the duty only of the pastor or other leaders. In

the Indian context, in all religious exercises (be it Christian, Muslim, Hindu or whatever) there are some spectators from other religions who are present, and if we remember that the Christian church in India is a very small minority (barely 4%) of the population, the presence of such onlookers while Christians are praying may be intimidating, particularly as words like King, Kingdom and other categories that may confront Hindu values are in use. Happily, in the last few years there is an effort to pray for the renewal of the church, the Indian church as a whole.

Though we have free access into the presence of God because of the cross, enabling us to pray spontaneously, yet I believe that in our corporate prayers we need to retain the richness of liturgical prayers since they contain the experience of past centuries. Our free access to God should not be interpreted to mean familiarity which breeds contempt, casualness or disorder. Hence my second plea is that our families and churches develop corporate prayer habits, praying *with* one another, as a church or family, going beyond the cottage, family or church calendar prayer meetings.

C. Prayer: The Criterion of a Minister's Spirituality

In most of our theological seminaries and Bible schools the emphasis is rightly on academic excellence, development of ministerial skills and Christian character. Surely prayer belongs to the essence of Christian character. Though most of these institutions grant degrees on the basis of the verification of academic excellence and ministerial skills, hardly any institutions test the prayer life of the student. If our pastors when leaving the seminaries were enthusiastically committed to teaching members of their congregations to develop their prayer-life, that might well trigger renewal in the Indian church.

In one way or the other, therefore, a theological student's prayer-life must be encouraged, developed and verified as essential for graduation. To develop a key course on prayer is the least we can afford to do.

May God grant grace to Indian churches and Christians to pray, and to pray without ceasing.

10

A Christian View of Prayer and Spirituality in Buddhist Thought

MASAO UENUMA

I. INTRODUCTION

Prayer and spirituality are rather personal issues of the Christian life, in the sense that each individual Christian needs to increase his or her own spirituality by means of much prayer. This has led some to assume that each Christian must manage by himself, at his own level. This individualism has often been compounded by subjectivism that denies legitimacy of thought about these matters, a stance only superficially related to Paul's words to the Corinthians: 'So what shall I do? I still pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind' (1 Cor. 14:15).

The subject has not often been taken seriously as a matter suitable for theological insight, in spite of its importance in the Christian's life. The inward life might be assumed to be the preserve of psychology or psychoanalysis. The issue of prayer and spirituality has not often been tied to other major theological topics of discussion.

Theology here means a rational reflection on what God has revealed of himself in Scriptures. It has its own long history and peculiar diversity, not least in the matter of prayer and spirituality. But the theology of the Western world has concentrated on rational and logical consistency, in comparison with the Eastern Orthodox Church.

In this paper, 'theology' refers to this rational and sometimes rationalistic reflection on the Scriptures that has characterised Western churches, whether within Roman Catholicism or in 17th century Protestant scholasticism. Evangelical churches in Japan have been influenced by these Western traditions. This granted, it is worth while to consider the bearing of Buddhism on this theological reflection, especially in the field of prayer and spirituality.

The highly technological society of Japan might seem not to need any religious dimension. The truth is that this technological and secular country supports a booming production of religious literature on the spiritual realm, including occult and mystical experiences. These were popular two decades ago in Western countries. In the 1960s, hippies left their own technological and advanced society and sought truth in Eastern religions. The Beatles sought a solution in Indian philosophy and religion. It cannot be thought surprising that a similar if smaller phenomenon is now occurring in such a technological society as Japan.

In many scientific circles, irrational elements are now taken seriously as part of the effort to grasp the total meaning of matter in space and time. The scientists in this tradition recognise that traditional knowledge cannot exhaustively explain the entire sphere of material and life. Arthur Koestler criticises mechanistic understandings of the organisation of the universe in his book *The Ghost in the Machine* (1967), and proposes a new paradigm to grasp the whole universe in his *Beyond Reductionism* (1969). Fritjof Capra tries to explain the whole sphere of matter and mind in his book on the relationship between Eastern mysticism and the curious world of quantum physics in *The Tao of Physics* (1975). Karl Pribram and Ken Welber have discussed this whole sphere of matter and mind as the holographic paradigm of the work of brain in *The Holographic Paradigm and Other Paradoxes* (1982). All these movements are called 'New Age Science' or 'New Age Religions'.[1]

This movement has not sprung up by itself, but is in part a response to the system of knowledge of Western thought. Whether or not scientists and philosophers have recognised their limitations in grasping all that occurs in space and time, the supernatural elements with the colour of spiritualism have penetrated into the gaps that the traditional knowledge-system has not covered up.

At the beginning of this century some philosophers struggled to remove this limitation and reach new areas that philosophy had not considered for almost its entire history in Western civilisation. Unhappily their struggles were fundamentally flawed, and so opened up the way for New Age religion. Martin Heidegger tried to find the word to express being itself, which had been lost in the dualistic pattern of subject and object. His effort was serious, and in some sense opened up a new paradigm of knowledge, but simultaneously contributed to the mysticism which appealed to the hippies of the 1960s.[2]

Alfred North Whitehead also criticised the traditional knowledge pattern of subject and object, because of its inability to grasp the whole process of each reality and its relativity. Ludwig Wittgenstein in his early works criticised propositions as described by traditional language analysis, stating that the objects are just *there* and we are not able to speak about their purpose, nature and meaning. Language cannot operate in these areas; Western philosophy must be silent in areas it is not competent to address. Silence is the ultimate contribution of his philosophy, but this also opens up the way for mysticism to sneak in.

If these philosophical investigations have given impetus to irrational and mystical dimensions, they have also challenged traditional understandings of God. These challenges must be taken seriously by evangelical theology, not least because evangelical theology claims to be marked by its faith in the God of the Bible.

The language and concepts of evangelical theology have sometimes displayed the same limitations as the traditional scientific and philosophical thought of the western world. The merely rational and logical descriptions of some branches of evangelical theology are not enough to deal with the elements that break in from the supra-rational and transcendental sphere. Prayer and spirituality reduced to individual method and manipulation trivialise God; they cry out for theological treatment. Otherwise evangelical theology is left exposed to spiritism.

Even if prayer and spirituality are taken seriously as theological issues, we immediately confront confusion as to the meaning and definition of spirituality and prayer. The vagueness of 'spirituality' is a reflection of the wide variety of religious experiences in each individual and in the world. It is often used to include any kind of spiritual element, including mystical or ecstatic experience. The meaning of spirituality for the Christian may well be delineated by the Bible, but it might be proper here to leave its meaning wide and a little vague so that we may fairly engage with the thought of Buddhism.

To avoid these dualistic modes of thought, a definition of spirituality is needed that embraces both transcendence and this world. For heuristic reasons, then, spirituality refers to the area where transcendence and finitude meet in our experience through some religious or sometimes pyschological means. It is normally tied to a religious belief system and thus becomes the element that gives structure to everything in space and time. In this broad sense, the general issues of transcendence and immanence, invisible world and visible world, subconscious and conscious, spirit and body, are all involved here. The spiritual realism is not divided and separated from the bodily realm, yet the two are not fused or mixed with each other.

Western rationalism often ignores the relationship between body and spirit. Consideration of the subject has been dismissed as academic heresy, the province of the mystic or the gnostic. It is time to investigate this realm and give it a proper place in the theological system. Otherwise, spiritual mysticism sneaks into Christian thought and corrupts a proper understanding of the Bible.

Prayer links the physical and spiritual realms. It is not only spiritual work, but physical work. One's physical state is often closely related to one's effectiveness in prayer; in prayer, the body sometimes feels the impact of spiritual power.

II. PRAYER AND SPIRITUALITY IN BUDDHISM

Buddhism has its own long and varied history. Buddhism itself allows a wide variety of understandings of what Buddha is supposed to have said. Each school develops its own understanding of Nirvana. Nevertheless there are common aspects in Buddhism that enable us to investigate the issue of prayer and spirituality. A broad approach to Buddhism is presented by Edward Conze,[2] who maintains, 'Buddhism is an Eastern form of spirituality.' He means by this a common human heritage of mind, by which a person finds the way to overcome this world and to gain immortality or a deathless life. Buddhism is an Eastern form of this common heritage. In this sense, there is in Buddhism a distinctive form of spirituality.

Though Conze admits that the word 'spirit' is quite vague, he rightly reports the ways of approach to the 'spiritual' as they are taught in many traditions. The spiritual realm is attained by ascecticism, *i.e.* by regarding sensory experience as relatively unimportant and by trying to renounce what one is attached to. These ways are often accepted as an approach to the spiritual realm even by Christians. Yet this approach to spirituality might be considered the basic principle of Buddhism.

It is debated whether the word 'spirit' is rightly used of original Buddhism.

The word 'mind' might be profitable to describe the inward sphere of the human being. The basic principle of original Buddhism could be called the theory of 'mind-only'. Both delusion and enlightenment are said to originate within the mind, and every existence or phenomenon is said to arise from the function of the mind. Both life and death are thought to arise from the mind. All things and thoughts are but mind only. As a philosophical doctrine, this approach has similarities to the idealism of Berkeley.

In the history of Buddhism, this idea of mind-only may well be the basic and original principle of its teachings. It may be wise at this point to confine our discussion to one school of Buddhism for the remainder of this paper. Mahayana Buddhism was chosen primarily because of its spread to Tibet, China, Korea, and Japan, where the author lives.

'Mahayana' means 'Great Carrier' or 'Great Vehicle', in comparison with 'Hinayana', which means 'Lesser Carrier' or 'Low Vehicle'. The Great Vehicle can accept all beings suffering in this world of birth and death, and can lead all of them, without any discrimination, to the state of enlightenment. This state is the aim of the ideal man called *Bodhisattva*, a status which is open to anyone.

The central teaching is the idea of 'emptiness', which is what stands right in the middle between affirmation and negation, existence and nonexistence, eternity and annihilation. The world is imprisoned between these two limits. Therefore, the enlightened man is the one who transcends this limitation by a thorough understanding of emptiness. A practical aphorism is: 'Never abandon all things, and see into the truth that all things are empty.' The idea of 'emptiness' is also found in the book of Ecclesiastes, but here 'emptiness' is not the ultimate means to salvation as it is in Buddhism. At best, it is the counsel of despair which brings Qoheleth to an end of selfish pursuits and the beginning of the pursuit of the personal-transcendent God. This fundamental difference is reflected in the different meanings prayer and spirituality enjoy in each system.

In Mahayana Buddhism, the focus is on the 'Tantric' or 'magical', simply because the supernatural or the mysterious is taken for granted in this school. Secondly, the sphere of the body is taken seriously as the realm of spiritual practice in this school.

It is not possible to be certain the exact time when Tantric practices were first instituted. Tantra was said to gather itself after 500 or 600 A.D., and was blended with Buddhist philosophy in India. Then the Chinese Mi-tsung school was also blended with this Tantric Buddhism, and embodied in a magical circle (mandala). This doctrine came to Japan with Kukai (Kobo Daishi, 774–835), and as the Shin-gon (True Word) school it is today one of the largest Japanese sects.

Thus Tantric or Esoteric Buddhism alone takes in a wide range of history. It is especially useful to study prayer and spirituality in *this* type of Buddhism because of its understanding of the body. In this sect of Buddhism, what might be called the cosmology of the body is assimilated with the cosmology of the universe. The former is described in the Circle of the Womb (*Garbhadhatu*; Japanese, *Taizokai* Mandala) and the latter in the Circle of the Thunderbolt (*Vajra-dhatu*; Japanese, *Kongoukai* Mandala). In other words, the former is the world of the phenomena emanating from the absolute, the latter is the world of absolute principle underlying reality. The

whole world is the Buddha's revelation to himself, and it is represented in these two mandalas.

Kukai's basic teaching is the doctrine of 'attaining Buddhahood in this body' through the communion with Buddha or God Buddha's mercy. Zen Buddhism aims this Buddhahood toward the mind. Taisetsu Suzuki thinks of this mind as the necessary principle used to understand the whole world of Buddhism, as the personal-transcendent God is properly basic to the understanding of Christianity. In this sense, Zen Buddhism might be closer to the original principle of Buddhism. It might be argued that all schools of Buddhism hold this Buddhahood to be in the realm of mind, each one simply unfolding different relationships with the body. Mind in this model is located within the body; in fact, the body feels what the mind knows, and the mind knows what the body feels.

In this relationship between the mind and the body, dear to Tantric Buddhism, the concept of the body is never neglected. Rather, it is the locus of the practice necessary to attain Buddhahood. Body, voice and mind are inseparable, valid loci of ritual means to attain this Buddhahood. They are called the Three Mysteries (by Kukai and Shingon [True Word] schools), which provide the means of entering quickly from everyday reality into the depths of the spiritual world.

The body is the first mystery, which manages the performance of spiritual gestures and dances. The body is, according to Kukai, made of the same six elements which also constitute the whole universe. The body is the small cosmos of the whole universe. The six elements are: earth, water, fire, wind, space and mind, which are interpenetrated with each other to constitute both small and large cosmologies. The mind is counted as an element only for the one who aims to achieve Buddhahood in the body. Space is the basic element for the whole universe, on which wind, water, land and fire are piled to constitute the universe. From the body, the mind counts the element of earth as the lowest part of the body, the element of water as the middle part of the body, and the elements of fire and mind as the higher parts of the body. The element of space is the basis for the body. The body will correspond to the universe by this practice of the mind.

The body performs different kinds of gestures to correspond with the universe's gestures, which work out a complicated classification of the magically efficacious positions of the body itself and of the hands. This performance aims to control the body; *e.g.* rhythmical and self-conscious (one might say 'mindful') breathing controls the lungs and respiratory system. To control the body is to be aware of the work of the body, as one is consciously aware of what one does when walking, standing, sitting, and so on.

The second mystery is the practice of voice by the recitation of spells. Though the use of spells was widespread among all nations in the pre-industrial period of human history, esoteric Buddhism thinks of this use of spells as the means to correspond with the words of the deity. This spell is the 'mantra'. There are voices and sounds in this universe which come from the deity, or benevolent higher being. The mantra is a means of getting in touch with the unseen forces around us through addressing their personifications. Edward Conze describes four aspects of the contemplative recitation.[4]

When the mantra is recited, one has to contemplate in one's heart the shape of the letters and distinguish well the sound of the different letters, then

understand well the significance of the phrases. Besides these three aspects of the contemplative recitation, there is the practice of breathing in which one has to regulate one's breath in order to contemplate the mutual interpenetration of the faithful and the Buddha. This fourth aspect is immediately related to the mystery of the mind, the practice of meditation. It is important to notice that this contemplative recitation is not understood to be spells of nothing, nonsense words, but corresponds with the voices, the words and the letters which are supposed to come from the deity. The world is composed of sounds and words which, though not identified with onotological reality, are nonetheless means that link the world and the senses of human beings. Not all words are true; only the words of Buddha are true. The Shingon (True Word) school is especially insistent on this approach to the 'word'. But this word is not a revelatory word but a hidden word. That is why this Shingon (True Word) school is essentially a part of Esoteric Buddhism in spite of its name (True Word).

The third mystery is the practice of the mind which turns out to be meditation on the deity. This practice of the mind has three aspects that contribute to the attainment of Buddhahood in the body. The first aspect is the understanding of emptiness which is the basic teaching of Mahayana Buddhism. This understanding is not to state the absolute emptiness, but to stand right in the middle of any kind of dualistic polarity. In other words, the understanding of emptiness is to accept the 'suchness' of everything, *i.e.* to take everything as it is.

This brings up the second aspect of meditation: the understanding of oneself such as one is. This meditation exposes one's attachment to oneself, which actually causes delusion and defilement in the mind. At this point, the practice of breathing is effective to control physical activity and to concentrate on inward activity of the mind. In this sense, emptiness becomes a synonym for non-self, or the absence of self, or self-effacement.

The third aspect is the ultimate purpose of the practice of meditation, by which one is identified with deity or becomes one with deity. It is again the emptiness of everything which allows this identification to take place — the emptiness which is in us coming together with the emptiness which is the deity. The mind is not separated from the body and speech; therefore this meditation is performed as a function of the entire process of the practice. Thus contemplative recitation also aims at this mutual interpretation of the faithful and the Buddha; rhythmical and self-conscious ('mindful') breathing helps the mind to concentrate. In this meditation, one has to sit quietly, hold one's hands gently and take deep breaths.

During the manifestation of the three Mysteries of the body, the voice and the mind, one feels as if one is identified with the Buddha, and in some schools of Esoteric Buddhism, it is taught that the Buddha's spirit permeates the entire body, with energy accumulating within. In this process the body is said to become purified like the Buddha, and the body's strength acquires supernatural dimensions.

The Shingon (True Word) school's basic teaching on attaining Buddhahood in this body is performed in this way, and the body may thereby be transformed into the purified being, which is symbolically personified as Bodhisattvas (in Japanese, *Bosatsu*), Amitabha (in Japanese, *Amida*), Avalokitesvara (in Japanese, *Kannon*), Ksitigarbka (in Japanese, *Jizo*), and

Manjusri (in Japanese, *Monju*). In the Shingon school, Kuukai is believed to have acquired Buddhahood in his body and in this sense to live eternally.

Certain Buddhism has many more features to study in regard to spirituality and prayer, but it is sufficient here to treat this subject in terms of the goal of attaining Buddhahood in this body. Something supernatural is thought to be actualised in the realm of the world by means of mystical practices. Spirituality is gained by way of recitation, bodily gestures and meditation. Evaluation of this Buddhist thought may be helped by a comparative study of Christian thought.

III. PRAYER AND SPIRITUALITY IN CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

Although Christian thought, like Buddhism, displays a wide variety of interpretations across the history of the church, nevertheless it is properly constrained by the written Word of God. Therefore, in one sense it would be most profitable to study prayer and spirituality directly from the Scriptures. If this were done, the discontinuities would stand out most starkly. The personal-transcendent God of the Bible is a *speaking* God. He has revealed himself in space-time revelation, in event and word, and supremely in his Word, his Self-Expression, who became a human being that he might more perfectly reveal himself to us. In Christian perspective, the fundamental human dilemma is not loss of contact with the impersonal-transcendent, but moral rebellion, sin, defiance against the God whose holiness we have violated. Restoration to fellowship with him therefore requires handling the sin problem. The solution is provided by God himself: his own incarnate Son dies to redeem rebellious human beings, and rises from the dead to demonstrate his victory and to bequeath his Spirit. Biblical spirituality is thus profoundly word-based. It is mediated by the Spirit, and anticipates the unqualified beatific vision only at the consummation, when the glorified and exalted Lord returns and finally destroys all enemies, even death itself. Full-orbed consideration of Christian spirituality cannot possibly neglect these theological structures, which are radically discontinuous with all forms of Buddhism.

The Incarnation is one of the mysteries revealed through the Scriptures. Recently *The Myth of God Incarnate* has brought the issue within the framework of modern rationalistic reductionism by interpreting the incarnation as the myth.[5] However to some extent rationalistic interpretations of the incarnation have manifested themselves throughout the history of the Christian church. Gustaf Aulén designates such approaches as examples of the 'Latin theory' (in his *Christus Victor*) *e.g.* Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*, in comparison with the 'classic theory' of Athanasius' *De Incarnatione*. Incarnation tends to be explained as a theoretical issue without clear connection with atonement. Incarnation, the cross and resurrection tend to become separate issues in rationalistic explanations of Western theology. This means that each issue is explained within its own theoretical framework. In this way the doctrine of the Incarnation loses a cosmological aspect, involving larger questions of transcendence and immanence.

In the Bible the doctrine of the Incarnation is most neatly summarised in the words of the Fourth Gospel: 'The Word became flesh and lived for a while

among us' (John 1:14). The transcendental and supernatural element touches the world and the natural element. At this point God touches the worldly as directly as when he created it. Athanasius said, 'Our creation and God's incarnation [are] most intimately connected'.[6] God's direct touching of this world is the closest Christian analogue to the Buddhist understanding of spirituality.

The Incarnation involves another important element to consider. It shows that God takes the body of human beings so seriously that the body itself might be counted to be involved in the issue of spirituality, as we have defined it. In the epistle to the Hebrews, it is said that 'surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants'. Jesus' body was a human body. Athanasius comments on the Incarnation in relationship to human salvation: 'For of this becoming Incarnate we were the object, and for our salvation He dealt so lovingly as to appear and be born even in a human body'.[7] In the Orthodox Church, this idea is described by the term 'deification' or 'divinisation'. This means that God became man that man might become deified. Deification is, in our view, the ultimate aim of the Eastern Orthodox Christian's life, which Vladimir Lossky sees as an expression of Eastern spirituality.[8]

Resurrection is another point at which God touches the body directly. In the theology of the Eastern Church, the doctrine of resurrection is not separated from the idea of incarnation. But in the teachings of Anselm, the doctrine of the resurrection is separated from the Incarnation, and he admits to having another argument to prove its necessity, saying, 'One can clearly prove the resurrection of the dead at some future time'.[9] Anselm's attitude has prevailed in the teaching of Christology in Western theology.

The resurrection is not merely spiritual matter separated from space and time, but is actually bodily resurrection of the dead. Saint Paul describes the bodily resurrection as 'a spiritual body (*pneumatikos*) in comparison with 'a natural body' (*psychikos*). The resurrection is not considered a possibility merely within the continuum of space and time. It is the power of God that raised Christ from the dead (Eph. 1:20), 'and he will raise us also' (1 Cor. 6:14). The resurrection of the dead is described as a spiritual body which a natural body cannot attain by itself.

In certain respects Paul sets the resurrection in relation to the spirit in much the same way as he sets the incarnation in relation to the flesh: Jesus Christ is regarded as the Son, 'Who as to his human nature (*kata sarka*) was a descendant of David, and who through the spirit (*kata pneuma*) of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead' (Rom. 1:3–4). As every branch of the church has insisted, the bodily resurrection of Jesus , not to mention the consummating general resurrection, belongs to the realm which the rational mind cannot understand and only the spiritual mind can accept: the event is supra-rational (not irrational) to be accepted by faith.

Jesus himself relates the bodily resurrection to the spiritual realm. On the controversy with the Sadducees, Jesus answers that 'When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage. They will be like the angels in heaven' (Mk. 12:25). So far as matrimony is concerned, angelic existence is the model to which the spiritual body conforms. The spiritual body is in some way anticipated in the transfiguration of Jesus.

After he comes down the mountain, Jesus connects his transfiguration with

the resurrection of the dead by saying to his disciples, 'Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead' (Mt. 17:9). In other words, Jesus showed his transfiguration to the disciples as the foretaste of the resurrection of the dead.

The spiritual body is glorious in comparison with the state of dishonour of the natural body. When God raised Jesus from the dead, he also glorified him (cf. 1 Pet. 1:21). This contrast is also described in Philippians 2:6–11: 'Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name' (2:9). The spiritual body is a glorified body after the life of this world. Jesus himself looked forward to this glory on his way to the cross; he 'for the joy set before him endured the cross' (Heb. 12:22). The spiritual life of Jesus himself is filled with knowledge of the suffering and the glory. Jesus prayed to God his Father before going to the cross, 'Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you' (Jn. 17:1). 'And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began' (17:5).

Paul in particular ties his own identity to the life of Jesus Christ, especially Jesus' resurrection life. Paul says that the Christian's life is now 'hidden with Christ in God' (Col. 3:3). This union is made certain by the resurrection of Jesus: 'Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God' (v.1).

The identity of the believer with Christ is repeated in Paul's writings. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul writes, 'I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me' (2:20). In his letter to the Romans, he talks in terms of baptism and a new life: 'We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. . . Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him' (6:4,5,8).

This togetherness with Christ is sometimes called the mystical union of Christ and the believer, the *unio mystica*. Louis Berkhof defines it as 'that intimate, vital and spiritual union between Christ and His people, in virtue of which He is the source of their life and strength of their blessedness and salvation'.[10] Others prefer to speak of 'incorporation' of the believer into Christ; still others hold that the categories in Paul are largely forensic. Though the idea is variously conceptualised in systems of theology, we still wonder how many take this idea of togetherness with Christ seriously. This subject has to be pushed further, especially owing to its apparent parallels with Buddhism. The parallels are indeed there, but it must be rememberd that however the union between believers and Christ be defined, Christ is never thereby exhausted as if no distinction can be maintained. Jesus Christ is still 'other', the Christian's Lord.

That the idea of togetherness with Christ is an important theme is clear from the New Testament. Paul prays that this Christ will be formed in each Christian (cf. Gal. 4:19). The transformation of Christians is assured by the formation of Christ in each one. This transformation (*metamorphosis*) brings believers into the likeness of Christ through the work of the Spirit. Paul says, 'And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit' (2 Cor. 3:18).

The power of the Spirit works through the body and transforms the body into the likeness of Christ. Paul continues to make clear the weakness of the human body in an illustration of jars of clay, and compares the weakness of the outward being and the renewal of the inward being (cf. 2 Cor. 4:7,16). The transformation itself is clearly tied to the resurrection of Christ and of the believer: Paul remarks, 'Because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence' (v.14).

In the ensuing section Paul analogically describes this life in terms of a heavenly dwelling: 'Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. . . For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life' (5:1,4).

The work of the Holy Spirit is the fundamental element for this transformation, based on the resurrection of Christ. Paul says, 'And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you' (Rom. 8:11). And Peter also writes, 'For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit' (1 Pet. 3:18).

It is important to notice that the work of the Spirit is connected with the work of resurrection and is not separated from the realm of the body. The Spirit is the one who tranforms believers. Here, however, the doctrine is not further developed as to how the Spirit works in the body, accomplishing its transformation.

Even functioning with a largely Buddhist notion of spirituality, the spirituality of Christian thought is, thus, very rich, because God takes care of the human being – the entire person, not only the realm of the soul, but also the realm of the body. The dualism of the spirit and the body in much Western thought has disrupted the proper understanding of true spirituality in Christian thought. Spirituality must not be relegated to the realm of mere experience. The issue of spirituality and prayer has to be considered as a theological subject.

IV. A THEOLOGICAL RECONSIDERATION OF SPIRITUALITY AND PRAYER.

The rather heuristic idea of spirituality adopted in this paper, as that dealing with something supernatural attained in some way in this world, allows us to make certain comparisons between Christianity and Buddhism, even if those comparisons need carcful qualification. In Buddhism, the idea of attaining Buddhahood in this body is bound up with the present realisation of 'spirituality'. Especially is this the case in Tantric and Esoteric Buddhism. This way of attaining Buddhahood may not be a dominant approach in traditional Buddhism, and might be discussed by some Buddhists as the teaching of a particular school. But the idea of attaining Buddhahood itself is taught in all forms of Buddhism. The distinctive element of Tantric and

Esoteric Buddhism is that the body is taken seriously as the instrument of spirituality.

In Christian thought, spirituality is finally actualised in the transformation of the believer into the likeness of Christ through the believer's resurrection from the dead. This transformation is begun in this world and consummated after this world by the power of the Spirit. The Christian's transformation is assured by the real transformation of Christ in his resurrection. The prospect of final transformation in Christian thought is based upon the historical reality of the resurrection of Jesus. Moreover, although the tranformation of the believer is actualised in some sense during the believer's historical pilgrimage, the actual transformation *of the body* awaits the parousia.

In Buddhist spirituality, achievement of Buddhahood in this body is basically not a gift from above, but an attainment from below. This is so in all forms of Buddhism. In Christian spirituality, transformation is a gift based upon the resurrection of Christ. It is accomplished by the work of the Spirit and the power of God, both for Christ and for the believer. Further, Mahayana Buddhism teaches a mutual penetration of the faithful and personified *Bodhisattvas* or Amitabha and so on. This interpenetration makes an identification of the faithful and the Amitabha. In avoiding the dangers of unambiguous dualism, Buddhism finally opts for unqualified monism. But the transformation of Christians is not an identification of the believer and Christ, but a transformation of the person into the likeness of Christ, culminating in the transformation of the body. After attaining Buddhahood in this body, each person is called Buddha. But after Christian transformation, no one is ever called Christ, but Christ himself.

No matter how broad and heuristic the notion of 'spirituality', it is very important in Christian thought that spirituality be intimately related to the historical reality of Jesus Christ incarnated and resurrected. If for the moment we adopt the terminology of Greek Orthodoxy and label the transformation of the believer his 'deification' it too is based upon this work of God through Christ performed by his incarnation and resurrection. Timothy Ware remarks that 'deification is something that involves the body'.[11] He says that the full deification of the body has to wait until the Last Day, for in this present life the splendour of the soul prevails over the body. But ultimately we await the renewal of all creation. Ware says that 'this idea of *cosmic redemption* is based . . . upon a right understanding of the Incarnation: Christ took flesh — something from the material order — and so has made possible the redemption and metamorphosis of *all* creation — not merely the immaterial but the physical'.[12] These ideas of deification and union, of the transfiguration of the body, and of cosmic redemption coalesce to contribute to the mystical theology of the Eastern Church.

Though this 'deification' or union with God is based upon the incarnation and the resurrection, the term itself generates a misunderstanding, much as the direct term 'union with God' does. For a start, one might more accurately speak of union with Christ than of deification or union with God. Even union with Christ does not mean utter, unqualified identification with Christ. The ontological difference between God or Christ and man should not be overlooked. T. Ware rightly states that 'the idea of deification must always be understood in the light of the distinction between God's essence and His energies. Union with God means union with the divine energies, not the

divine essence: the Orthodox Church, while speaking of deification and union, rejects all forms of pantheism'.[13] Nevertheless, the terminology of Orthodox mystical theology is readily confused with that of Eastern religions which teach that man is swallowed up in the deity as in Tantric or Esoteric Buddhism.

In Buddhism, there is absolutely no ontological difference between man and deity. Indeed, there can be no ontological issue in Buddhism because every matter is a reflection of the mind and therefore in itself is considered to be illusion. The phenomena of the mind and consciousness constitute the whole world. Therefore, even the ontology of the Buddha is not a primary issue, quite unlike the ontological status of the God of Christianity. Other personified images are worshipped without any trouble in Buddhist schools. The work of mind and consciousness is counted an essential element to reach enlightenment, an essential goal of which is finally to bring the body under control. The heightening of consciousness is worked out through different kinds of practices.

In the Christian tradition, the elevation of religious consciousness was probed in the theology of Schleiermacher. In his theology, the ontology of Christ is not taken seriously; therefore the religious consciousness of Jesus and of the believers is counted as the element of salvation, because the consciousness of Jesus is an example of highest religious feeling, that is, an absolute dependence on God, and the incarnation and the resurrection of Christ are not taken as spiritual realities for the aim of Christian spirituality. If they are not taken seriously, the spirituality of Christian thought degenerates into a vague and mystical religious experience. Gnostic experiences throughout the history of Christianity could not avoid this tendency. The teaching of the Unification Church should be unmasked in this connection.[14]

The ontological difference between God and man is a basic element of Christian thought, but this ontological reality does not entitle us to abandon the area of feeling, consciousness and the mind of man as vague or mystical elements of the individual experience. The knowledge of the ontology of God and man has often been conceptualised in the categories of rationalistic Western philosophy. Then theology itself leaves the element of mind and consciousness to personal experience. But personal experience should not be reduced to the ineffable; genuinely Christian spirituality is based upon the spirituality of Jesus Christ, and is to be shared with others.

In this area, whatever we may think of its peculiar, theological emphases, Eastern theology offers a good balance of personal experience and theological system. Vladimir Lossky summarises this point by writing that 'the eastern tradition has never made a sharp distinction between mysticism and theology; between personal experience of the divine mysteries and the dogma affirmed by the Church'.[15]

Theology and 'mysticism' (though the word is admittedly open to considerable abuse and misunderstanding) support and complete each other, so far are they from being mutually opposed. If personal experience works out of the content of the common faith, theology might be an expression of that which can be experienced by everyone. This balance will erect a good safeguard against some peculiar spiritual movement sneaking into the church. Tantric and Esoteric Buddhism will appeal to those who have little experience

of and do not know how to think about the 'mystical' experience of Christian thought. But if theology takes this area seriously, then it could prevent the identification of this 'mystical' Christian experience with Eastern religious mysticism.

In Tantric and Esoteric Buddhism, the three mysteries of voice, body and mind — that is, recitation, gesture and meditation — are unavoidable means by which Buddhahood can be attained in this body. This practice of prayer in Buddhism cannot be said to be the same as in Christian thought. For a start, there is no clear object or person to whom to pray in Buddhism.

For the spirituality of transformation of believers into the likeness of Christ, prayer is not the direct means by which this transformation is achieved in believers. Prayer makes clear what one believes about God who works through Christ in his incarnation and resurrection. The transformation will never be achieved by any effort of prayer, but by the work of the Holy Spirit. But prayer itself is motivated by the Spirit. The culminating transformation is still to come: 'now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands' (2 Cor. 5:1). Nevertheless, the Spirit has already been given as a guarantee of this building: 'Now it is God who has made us for this purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come' (2 Cor. 5:5). In Christian spirituality, prayer is a means by which the Spirit works to make the knowledge of God clearer: 'For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness", made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ' (2 Cor. 4:6).

Christian meditation, unlike the Buddhist variety, is meditation directed by the word of God, who leads men and women into Christian spirituality as they think on Jesus Christ. That is why Peter says, 'I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me' (2 Pet. 1:12–13). Meditation helps to refresh the Christian's memory given by his or her experience of Jesus Christ.

The fact of ontological differences between God and man: this is perhaps the fundamental element that distinguishes Christian spirituality from any 'Eastern' spirituality. There is in the Christian way no elevation from some lower level to a higher spirituality attained by human means. Prayer is not a means by which to attain spirituality, but a way through which the Spirit works to realise what is promised.

11

A Christian View of Prayer and Spirituality in Muslim Thought

MICHAEL NAZIR-ALI

Those chapters of the Qurān which are regarded as chronologically early (though not necessarily appearing early in the present order of the Qurān) are mostly the ones which are brief and are either invocatory or 'prophetic' in content. They tend to be permeated with a sense of the numinous which brings awe in its wake and which makes demands of a moral nature on human beings. The spirituality of these chapters may rightly be called a spirituality of the 'prophetic' type. The most well-known example of these chapters is the one called *Fātiḥa* (the word means 'opening' and, indeed, this chapter is found at the very beginning of the Qurān). The *Fātiḥa* is a short prayer which first praises God the Creator of the Universe and the Judge of all and then calls on him for guidance along the right path. Its rôle in Muslim devotion has often been compared to that of the Lord's Prayer in Christian devotion.[1] Louis Massignon, a well known Christian scholar of *Islām*, called it 'a prayer of the community of Abraham'.[2] The 'prophetic' type of spirituality is not, of course, limited to these chapters of the Qurān. It may be said, however, that these chapters typify such spirituality. In these chapters an experience of God as 'other', as utterly transcendent, is often portrayed. Experience of God, moreover, is not for its own sake but to guide human beings to right action. An Indian Muslim mystic, ᶜAbdul Quddūs Gangōhī, is reputed to have said, '*Muḥammad* of Arabia ascended to the highest heaven and returned. I swear by Almighty God that if I had reached such a state, I would never have returned!' Muḥammed Iqbāl, a great Muslim scholar of this century, remarks that this sums up the difference between 'prophetic' and 'mystic' consciousness. The mystic is concerned to preserve and to cultivate 'the repose of unitary experience', whereas the 'prophet' is concerned with translating an experience of the divine into action which tends to change the world.[3]

Apart from this 'prophetic' consciousness, there is also in the Qurān a sense of God's pervasiveness in the world and his nearness to human beings. The famous 'Light verse' in the Qurān is regarded by many Muslims as illustrative of God's all-pervading glory:

> God is the Light of the heavens and the earth.
> The parable of his Light is as if there were a Niche
> And within it a Lamp;
> The Lamp enclosed in Glass:

The Glass as it were
A brilliant star:
Lit from a blessed Tree,
An olive, neither of the East
Nor of the West,
whose oil is well-nigh Luminous.
Though fire scarce touched it:
Light upon Light!
God doth guide
whom he will
To his Light (24:35).

God is also spoken of as nearer to human beings than their jugular veins (50:16), though it may be that here it is his omniscience which is being emphasised rather than his immanence. In 5:57, it is said that God will bring forth a people whom he will love and who will love him. Close fellowship with God is thus declared as at least possible in the Qurān. The closest encounter that a human being has had with God, for Muslim tradition, remains that of the prophet of Islam's vision which is recorded in chapter 53 of the Qurān.

The origins of mystical consciousness in Islām are to be found in such a sense of God's pervasiveness and nearness. It is true though that the Muslim mystical tradition developed in relation to the living and ever-present reality of Christian monasticism. Admiration for the spirituality of Christian religious is already present in the Qurān itself (5:85) and is acknowledged by both Christian and Muslim scholars as a source of inspiration for the early Muslim mystics.[4] Nor is a Muslim appreciation of Christian spirituality totally a thing of the past. Some contemporary Muslim scholars give it an important place in their own work today.[5] It is also true that other influences on Islām, such as Neo-Platonism and Indian monism, have made a formative impact on Ṣūfism (Islamic mysticism). In the early period, Muslim mystical tradition was usually theistic and emphasised personal devotion to God. As influences other than Christianity became more important, however, the tradition became preoccupied with themes such as the unity of all being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), the absorption and annihilation of the individual self in the life of God and even the necessity for an inner kind of knowledge (*maᶜrifa*). Despite the many and diverse influences on the formation of the mystical tradition in Islām, Muslims have continued to seek authentication of their spiritual experience in the Qurān and in the practice of their prophet, the *Sunnah*.

The *Ṣalāt* is the ritual prayer which is obligatory for a Muslim. It has to be said five times a day and consists mostly of recitation from the Qurān and the adoption of certain postures, such as prostration, bowing, etc., which are suggestive of worship. Perhaps it can be said that the Muslim experience of God as utterly transcendent and beyond human comprehension is focused and defined in the *Ṣalāt*. The opening prayer, for example, which is said before the recitation of the *Fātiḥa*, goes like this: 'I have turned my face towards him who created the heavens and the earth, true in faith, a Muslim and I am not one of the idolators'. Sometimes, after the recitation of the *Fātiḥa*, other verses such as the famous throne verse are recited:

God! there is no god but he,
The Living.

The Self-subsisting, Eternal.
No slumber can seize him,
Nor sleep. His are all things
in the heavens and on earth.
Who is there can intercede
in his presence except
as he permits? He knows
what is Present and Past,
They know nothing of his knowledge,
except in so far as he wishes.
His throne embraces the heavens and the earth.
He feels no fatigue in guarding and preserving them,
He is the exalted, the mighty (2:255).

In prostration, the worshipper says, 'Glory be to my Lord, the most exalted and to him praise!' The institution of the *Ṣalāt* (the word itself is of Aramaic origin) seems to be modelled, in its recitation and posture, on Christian and Jewish worship, particularly on the monastic offices of the Christian church.

The *Duᶜā* (or invocatory prayer), which is sometimes said in conjunction with the *Ṣalāt* but which can be offered at other times as well, is perhaps a context in which nearness to God is experienced by the Muslim. Constance Padwick quotes from a *Duᶜā* of a famous Muslim saint, ᶜAbdul Qādir Al-Jīlānī, 'O God we take refuge with thy friendship from thy aversion, with thy nearness from thy distance, and we take refuge with thee from thee.'[6] Already in the Qurān (*e.g. Sūrah* 97), the night is the time when God's message is revealed, and in Muslim tradition it has become the time when God's nearness is especially experienced. Prophetic tradition speaks of God coming down at night to hear the petitions of the believers and a special non-obligatory form of *Ṣalāt* called *tahajjud* can be performed in the middle of the night. A well-known Muslim prayer speaks thus of divine intimacy with 'lovers of God', at this time of the night: 'My God and my Lord, eyes are at rest, stars are setting, hushed are the movements of birds in their nests, of monsters in the deep. And thou art the Just who knowest no change, the Equity that severeth not, the Everlasting that passeth not away. The door of kings are locked, watched by their bodyguards, but thy door is open to him who calls on thee. My Lord, each lover is now alone with his beloved, and thou art for me the Beloved'.[7] The similarities between the practices of Christian Syrian and Egyptian ascetics and Muḥammad's meditations during the night in the cave of *Ḥirā* have often been noticed. As Islām moved into the 'christianised' culture of West Asia and Africa, traditions about night-vigils began to be emphasised and keeping vigil became an important part not only of Muslim ascetical practice but of popular devotion too.[8]

One aspect of Muslim devotional practice which has to be noticed is that of *dhikr*. The term itself means 'remembrance' and is related to Hebrew and Aramaic words for 'mentioning the name of the Lord' (*e.g.* Ps. 20:7). In the Qurān it sometimes has this meaning and is specifically related to the performance of the *Ṣalāt* (87:15; 33:41; 4:142; 5:91; 62:9). At other times, it seems to mean the remembrance of God during the pilgrimage (2:200) or in the context of covenant (2:152). In Muslim devotion, however, the term has come to mean the recitation of certain fixed formulae (usually based on the attributes of God). *Dhikr* can be solidary or solitary. As communal exercises,

gatherings for the purpose of *dhikr* have great appeal for the masses. At such gatherings, the rhythm of sound and movement create a trance-like state among the devotees so that the daily pressures of life are forgotten and ordinary inhibitions overcome. *Dhikr* can be performed on one's own too. Indeed, some *Ṣūfīs* (Muslim mystics) claim that there is never a time when the devotee is free of the obligation to perform *dhikr*.[9]

The outward recitation of the formula, accompanied by suitable movements of the body, is said to induce a state of interior recollection and concentration. Bishop Timothy Ware has pointed out that the practice of reciting the Jesus Prayer was already current in Eastern Christianity from the fifth century onwards. This practice too, by means of recitation and movement, is said to assist concentration in meditation. Bishop Ware, himself, has noted the similarities between the Jesus Prayer and *dhikr*.[10] Given the close contact that existed between Christian ascetics and Muslim *Ṣūfīs* in the early years of Islām, these similarities are remarkable indeed. The recitation of *dhikr*, meditation and ascetical practices are some of the ways in which a mystically inclined Muslim prepares for mystical experiences. There are different stages of such preparation and they are called *maqāmāt* (sing. *maqām*). They must be distinguished from the experience itself, which too can come in a variety of ways which are called *Aḥwāl* (sing. *ḥāl*). The preparation is what the human being does in order to prepare for the experience. The experience, however, is regarded as 'given' and not at all the product of human effort. Many of the *Aḥwāl* were experienced as 'union' with all things or with the Absolute itself. This experience was often explained in monistic terms drawn from Neo-Platonism or the Indian monistic tradition of *Vedanta*.

Many *Ṣūfīs* were, however, already aware that such an experience of 'union' is not the ultimate in mystical experience but only a beginning. Sheikh Aḥmad Sarhindī, the 17th century Indian mystic, developed a system which went beyond the experience of monism to a fully fledged theistic experience.[11] In modern times Professor R. C. Zaehner, basing himself upon the work of Al-Qushayrī, has suggested that mystical experience is analysable in terms of the manic-depressive syndrome. In the 'manic' phase the mystic experiences a sense of identity with the rest of the Universe. This is sometimes expressed in the language of nature mysticism and at other times in the language of monism. The self is spoken of as 'absorbed into' God, the Absolute or the Unity of Being. The 'depressive' phase is characterised by withdrawal from the world and a sense of 'aloneness'. The divinity of the self may be emphasised but not its unity with all being. In Indian tradition, *Samkhya* is a mystical-philosophical system which emphasises the increasing isolation of the self on the path to perfect liberation. Extremely ascetical and eremitical tendencies within Christianity and Islām also, however, illustrate the 'depressive' phase.[12] It will be noticed that for Sarhindī, the experience of Union is but a stage on the mystical journey which, if continued, goes on to an experience of God as personal and the human self as enduring. For Zaehner, on the other hand, different experiences represent different kinds of mysticism, with theistic mysticism being neither unitive nor isolationist but relational.[13]

Traditionally, Christian and Muslim spirituality, even where there has been a long experience of living together and of close interaction, have developed

along separate lines. For some this is inevitable, given the very different beliefs of the two faiths. Christian spirituality is often based on the doctrine of the Incarnation and its corollary, *theōsis*. Devotion is focused on God-made-man and its ultimate goal is the divinisation of the human (2 Pet. 1:3,4). These are precisely the areas of Christian belief which are rejected by the Qurān. Islām denies even the possibility of incarnation, basing itself on God's utter transcendence and aweful majesty (Q 5:75–80, 119f.; 9:30). Divinisation, of course, would be *shirk*, associating partners with God, arguably the greatest sin in Islam! The doctrine of the Incarnation leads at least some Christians to sacramental forms of devotion. Iconography, the drama of the liturgy, reaching its climax in the partaking of a sacred meal and even the use of music are justified by an appeal to the 'incarnational' or sacramental principle. God has revealed himself in the material order and the material may be regarded as a proper medium for the worship of God. In orthodox Islām at least, apart from the postures of the human body, this emphasis is missing. It is true, of course, that popular devotion has not been able to do without the sacramental and 'incarnational' and so Muslim theologies of 'incarnation' have developed hand in hand with 'sacramental' devotional practices such as the veneration of the tombs of *Ṣūfī* saints and the whole *cultus* associated with them.[14] Interaction with other religious traditions can often be discerned in such developments. We have seen, however, that much of Muslim devotional practice is closely related to forms of Christian ascetical practice, and that even important ritual practices like the *Ṣalāt* have points of contact with Christian worship.

In architecture too there is a close relationship. When Islam emerged out of desert Arabia, it appropriated much of the religious architecture of the surrounding Christian cultures for its own use. This is not to say, of course, that there were no other influences or that there was not a great deal of creativity in the adaptations themselves. There is, nevertheless, a great deal of commonality. The *mihrāb* or the niche facing Mecca is strongly reminiscent of the apses in Christian churches, the *minarets* remind us of towers and the term *minbar* which is used for the raised platform from which the sermon is delivered is used also by Christians and, in a slightly varied form, by Jews for the pulpit. The central feature of the mosque, the dome, is, of course, of Byzantine origin. Throughout the centuries, churches have been converted into mosques and, in some cases such as Spain, mosques have been turned into churches. In addition, sacred buildings (such as tombs) belonging to one faith have sometimes been used as places of worship by those of the other faith.[15]

We have noticed the tremendously wide range of sharing that has existed between Muslims and Christians over the past centuries. This has implications for the inculturation of Christian spirituality in cultures which have been shaped by Islām. Inculturation is a necessary aspect of evangelisation. The gospel cannot be said to have been shared unless it is first translated or interpreted into the language, thought-forms and life-style of a particular people. There is an inherent capacity in the gospel for interpretation into a multitude of languages and cultures. Both history and contemporary experience bear witness to this continual process of interpreting the gospel to different ages and cultures. It has been pointed out in this paper that Islām was itself formed within a Christian milieu and that its subsequent contacts

with Christianity have had a formative influence on its spiritual and material culture. The inculturation of the gospel and of Christian spirituality into Islamic cultures thus poses a specially fascinating challenge for Christians. How far is it possible to use Muslim devotional terminology, formed under Christian influence, for contemporary Christian worship? Should common terms be used for God? Should postures of reverence and meditation be adopted? Is it possible to build churches with domes and minarets? Is it desirable? How may Christian distinctives be communicated in forms which have been used to convey other distinctives?

Different churches and Christians in different situations will come to different conclusions about these matters. What is important, however, is that Christians should take inculturation seriously not only at the level of translating the Scriptures and other Christian literature but in forms of worship, posture at prayer, liturgical terminology, spiritual exercises and other related matters. Owing to a very long history of interaction, dialogue and simply living together, Christian inculturation within cultures shaped by Islām has particular significance. In the area of spirituality it can provide the Christian church with a rich vocabulary and heritage, much of which would be a recovery by the church of its own past should the church decide to appropriate it for its own life and witness.[16]

12

An Evangelical View of Prayer and Spirituality in Roman Catholicism (with special reference to Latin America)

EMILIO ANTONIO NÚÑEZ C.

I. INTRODUCTION

To study the history of Christian spirituality is a fascinating and profitable task. From New Testament times through the Middle Ages and even up to modern times, spirituality has been one of the most important elements in the doctrines and practices of Christianity.

There are famous names in the history of Christian spirituality: Augustine of Hippo, St. Benedict, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Dominic, Thomas à Kempis, Teresa de Avila, Juan de la Cruz, Martin Luther, Philip Jacob Spener, August Hermann Francke, Count von Zinzendorf, John Wesley, to mention just a few.

In more recent times there have been outstanding Catholic pietists like Charles de Foucauld, who dedicated himself to work as a missionary among the Muslims and was assassinated by bandits in the Sahara desert in 1916. Another example is that of Teresa de Lisieux (1873–1897). She was proclaimed by Pope Pius X as 'the greatest saint of modern times'.[1] Pope Pius XI gave her the title of 'patroness of foreign missions', although she spent her religious life in a convent.[2]

Teresa's dedication to the ministry of prayer was impressive. To pray was her continuous practice from her childhood. It was her way of life. She was continually conscious of the presence of God in her life. According to her own testimony, she had never been for more than three minutes without thinking about God, 'because', she said, 'it is natural to think of the one we love'.[3] At the same time one of her spiritual exercises was to memorise Bible verses to use them in her prayer life. But as a faithful Catholic, Teresa considered herself to be a privileged daughter of the virgin Mary, whom she deeply loved. Her devotional life was impregnated by this love. She addressed Mary in prayer with great confidence, believing that the mother of Jesus would give her strength, protection, and guidance in her spiritual life. Teresa's example of personal piety is much alive in Roman Catholicism today, although she lived in the nineteenth century.

In the present paper, attention will be given to spirituality and prayer in Latin America, with a special reference to Evangelicalism and Roman Catholicism.

II. SPIRITUALITY AND PRAYER IN LATIN AMERICAN CATHOLICISM

A. Spirituality and Popular Religion

1. Historical background

It is not possible to have a clear understanding of Catholic spirituality in Latin America apart from at least a brief consideration of both the Amerindian religion in pre-colonial times and the type of Catholicism brought by the Iberians to their colonies.

The life of the aborigines in Central and South America was deeply impregnated by a polytheistic and animistic religion. They were profoundly religious in their interpretation of the cosmos, and in their own way of life. Religion played an essential role in their daily lives, in their concept of history, and in their view of the future. They believed that there were special deities for different situations in human life. For instance, the farmer, the fisherman, the soldier, the merchant, and even the comedian and dancer, all had their own gods for their own protection and success in life. Of course, they made images of their favourite gods and goddesses. In their view, nature was populated by good and bad spirits.

Horrified by the multitude of idols that the 'Indians' worshipped, the Iberians gave themselves to the task of destroying that 'pagan religion'. They tried to persuade the aborigines to accept the Catholic faith by indoctrination, or by the sword. It has been said that Catholicism was imposed on that people by the crucifix and the archebus. On many occasions the power of the archebus and the sword was more effective than the power of the cross. Another strategy used to 'Christianise' the Amerindians was that of substituting European images for the Indian idols. The unavoidable result was religious syncretism.

The faith propagated by Spain and Portugal in Latin America was medieval Catholicism. The Protestant Reformation was stopped at the Pyrenees. The church established in Latin America was to a large extent intolerant and fanatical. The colonial authorities prohibited the circulation of Protestant literature in the Spanish territories. Protestants were not allowed in these colonies. The church was not interested in the distribution of the Scriptures among the masses. The Vulgate, or a translation of it, was the only Bible authorised by the church. In some cases Bible reading was permitted, under the supervision of the priest. The Christianity of famous Spanish pietists like Juan de la Cruz and Luis de León was not widely known in the Spanish colonies.

Bartolome de las Casas and other monks and priests were indignant because of the oppression suffered by the aborigines under Spanish rule. Bartolome de las Casas' defence of the Amerindians before the colonial authorities in Spain is a magnificent chapter in the history of the struggle for freedom and other human rights. But the official church took sides both with the colonial government and with the emerging wealthy class in Latin America. In other words, the church did not defend the people who had lost their land and their freedom. This is the church that helped shape Latin American culture. This is the church that promoted Roman Catholic spirituality in Latin America. The mixture of Amerindian religion with

Iberian Christianity produced the contemporary religion and religious practices of the Latin American masses.

2. *Traditional popular religion*

To millions of Latin Americans their Catholic faith is a long-standing and respectable tradition that demands their unconditional obedience. They feel compelled to be loyal to it to maintain their own cultural identity. To abandon Roman Catholicism would mean disloyalty to the faith of their forefathers and the betrayal of their own country.

There are also people who live under the superstitious fear that a curse will come upon them and their family if they dare to leave the Catholic Church. In these cases popular religion is the outcome of superstition. No wonder that these people vehemently profess Catholicism, but at the same time they are afraid of witchcraft.

Millions of Latin Americans practise a sort of religious syncretism. Their faith is a mixture of Roman Catholicism and indigenous religions. The Christo-paganism phenomenon is a part of our Latin American culture, both among Amerindian groups in South and Central America, and Afro-Catholic cults in Brazil and the Caribbean. There are Amerindians who kneel down before European images in Roman Catholic temples to worship deities of pre-colonial times. In this syncretistic cult, prayer is addressed not to Catholic saints, much less to the Christian God, but to gods and goddesses of a local Olympus.

The Latin American masses depend on sacred places and images of saints to pray. Catholic leaders explain that the images are only means, not an end in themselves, for the spiritual exercise of prayer. They say that it is the saint represented by the image who becomes an intercessor on behalf of the one praying. But among the people (high class people included) it is strongly believed that some images are more effective than others in giving what the faithful ask in prayer.

The Catholic doctrine of prayer is closely related to the idea that the saints in heaven possess a surplus merit (or 'superabundant satisfactions') before God. On the basis of this merit they are mediators of grace for the benefit of the militant church on earth. The prayers of Christians are taken to the presence of God by the glorified saints, who are the triumphant church. Of course, only rarely do the common people think along the lines of this theological explanation when they prostrate themselves before a particular image. Usually it is the image that captivates their thoughts and feelings. Otherwise, they would not travel hundreds of miles to pray in the presence of a particular image.

The Marian cult is indisputably central to popular Roman Catholicism. Because of her willingness to serve as the chosen instrument for the incarnation, the merit of Mary is superabundant. She is full of grace, and a mediatrix of grace. As 'the Mother of God' she is closer to the Father than other saints. Besides, the Son cannot reject the intercession of his own mother.

In traditional Latin American homes the father has long been the highest representative of justice. As the executioner of justice, he could be the only one who physically punished the children. The mother was the symbol of

kindness. She could intercede before her severe husband to avoid punishment for the children. The situation at home helped the common people to understand and appreciate the Catholic teaching on the role of Mary as mediatrix of grace.

For all practical purposes, in Roman Catholicism the ministry of Christ as the only mediator between God and men is mediated through the intercession of the glorified saints, and in a very special way through Mary's intercession. The Marian cult is second in importance only to the worship rendered to God. For millions of Catholics prayer would be meaningless apart from devotion to Mary.

The mediation of the Catholic priest is also necessary for men and women to have access to God. The priest is mediator between God and men. For instance, the value of the mass for the dead depends on the ministry of the priest, who pronounces the intercessory prayer. Only the consecrated priest is the minister of the Eucharist. The power of consecration in this sacrament resides exclusively in a validly consecrated priest.[4]

To offer a mass in intercession for a beloved one who has departed from this world is a common practice in Roman Catholicism. According to Catholic doctrine, 'the living faithful can come to the assistance of the souls in purgatory by their intercessions (suffrages) . . . By suffrages are understood not only intercessory prayers but also indulgences, alms, and other pious works, above all the Holy Sacrifice of mass.'[5]

Prayer by Catholic people has consisted mainly of the repetition of the Lord's prayer, the Ave Maria, and other prayers which have been a part of their liturgy through the centuries. At least in public, spontaneous prayer has not been the usual practice of Catholics in Latin America.

Traditional popular religion is still promoted, or at least tolerated, by the hierarchy. Catholic leaders realise that there are abuses, or excesses; but at the same time they see that it is necessary, for the benefit of the masses, not to suppress but to preserve, and direct in a proper way, those religious expressions which are deeply rooted in Latin American culture. There is no doubt that most of the people who participate in processions, pilgrimages, and other public activities of traditional Catholicism are sincere in their faith. But sincerity is not enough to please God. Salvation comes by grace, not by works but by faith in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the only Mediator between God and men.

3. *Contemporary popular religion*

Roman Catholicism is not as homogeneous as it appeared to be in the past. Several factors have contributed to the diversity and lack of unity in the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America. The influence of Vatican II and the impact of social change on these countries since the end of World War II are evident. There is now a difference between the speculations of revolutionary theologians and the way in which the common people think and believe. There are strongly conservative bishops and, on the other hand, open-minded hierarchs who are deeply committed to the cause of social and political liberation for the poor.

At the present time it is possible to draw a contrast between traditional popular religion and contemporary popular religion. The latter may be

related to liberation theology. Segundo Galilea, a Catholic theologian from Chile, says that to evangelise in Latin America, two factors are to be taken into consideration: popular religion, and the struggle for liberation at the economic, social, and political levels.[6] Both elements should be present, according to Galilea, in the popular Catholic movement known as 'Christian based communities'. In Latin America the 'base communities' are groups of Catholics who usually belong to the lower strata of society and who organise themselves to edify one another in their faith and to help each other in the struggle for life. Bible study in response to spiritual and social needs, and political indoctrination, have an important place in the life of many of these groups.

Galilea affirms that the law of symbolism is also applied in religion. In his opinion there are three symbols that are indispensable in evangelism today: the liturgy, the saints (especially the virgin Mary), and the testimony of Christian fraternity. Religious festivities, processions, and other events of Roman Catholicism at the popular level are also symbolic and useful in the evangelisation of Latin America.[7]

Contemporary popular religion is not supposed to be individualistic, dualistic, or isolated from social realities, but it must preserve traditional symbols of the Catholic faith. The 'base communities' have to be kept within the Roman Catholic fold.

Frei Betto says that the poor in the 'base communities' are really willing to pray. They trust religious leaders who hold the supernatural in high regard. The Church is to them not just a centre of political indoctrination for the defence of human rights, but the sphere of the divine. It is God who gives them the strength to overcome the difficulties in their lives.[8] Their hearts thirst for God, for the true and living God.

B. Spirituality and the Renewal of the 'Religious Life'

The concept of spirituality among many Catholics in Latin America has been tied to the monastic, in the sense that members of religious orders are held to be first class Christians. In this view, a high level of Christian spirituality is not attainable for the people who have a 'worldly' vocation. Beyond the normal are religious orders whose members profess chastity, poverty, and obedience; and they dedicate much of their time to prayer and other spiritual exercises. The spiritual emphasis is, of course, even greater in the case of contemplative orders in which prayer and meditation are preeminent.

The Vatican II document, 'On the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life', has to do with religious orders or institutes. The Council has a great deal to say about the laity, but the traditional difference between the lay people and those who belong to religious orders is maintained. The 'religious life' is different to a large extent from that of the common people in the Church. Only a few are called by God to practise 'the evangelical counsels' (chastity, poverty, and obedience), dedicating themselves in a very special way to serve God and neighbour. There is, of course, a variety of religious groups in Roman Catholicism. Some of them live in community without exercising the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. In other institutions, the 'evangelical counsels' are practised 'without the protection of religious habit, cloistered room, or spiritual exercises in common'.[9]

In the opinion of the Council fathers the 'religious life' has a necessary role to play in the circumstances of the present age for the benefit of Church and society. There are religious orders which have rendered an outstanding service to the needy around the world. In this case spirituality and sacrificial service go together.

According to John J. McEleney, the answer to the Council document is much more than a change of religious dress or 'a sweeping adaptation to the spirit of our times'.[10] Two fundamental norms must operate: the following of Christ as set down in the Gospels, and obedience to the rules of the founder of a particular order or institute. It is mainly spiritual renewal which the Council demands. It exhorts members of religious communities 'to cultivate the spirit of prayer and the practice of it'.[11]

Lay religious people who profess the 'evangelical counsels' have also to be diligent in educating the young, caring for the sick, and discharging other services.[12] The traditional emphasis of religious orders on ministering to the poor may be one of the reasons that liberation theology has been received with sympathy by some communities of the Catholic church.

The concern of modern Catholic pietists for the political liberation of the poor is expressed in prayers like the ones published in Spanish by Ignacio Larrañaga. One of those prayers is entitled 'Option for the Poor'. The author addresses himself to Jesus, 'the brother of the poor', the one who took up the flag of the oppressed, because only the poor give space in their lives to the kingdom of God. 'It is time to start on the way to stop misery and tears, to break the metal of chains, to support the fighter in his dignity, because the new day of liberation is coming, and the swords will be buried in a fertile land.' At the end of his prayer, Larrañaga implores, 'Give us, Lord Jesus, your sensitive and courageous heart; deliver us from indifference and passivity; give us the ability to commit ourselves deeply to the cause of the poor and forsaken in this world.'[13]

This prayer is far away from that spirituality which avant-garde Catholic theologians reject as individualistic, dualistic, and limited to minorities in the Church. It is the way many people in religious orders can express their feelings. They have gone from the practice of charity as social assistance to a real concern for the deepest causes of poverty and social injustice. As a result of this concern, spirituality is not any more a traditional mystical experience isolated from the world, but a commitment to transform the world.

C. Spirituality and Liberation Theology

Gustavo Gutiérrez defines spirituality as 'the rule of the Spirit in the life of the believer'.[14] But this spirituality takes a concrete form in the commitment to the process of the liberation of the oppressed. It is not 'the spirituality of evasion' from the problems of society. Gutiérrez explains that the spirituality of liberation will be centred on the conversion of the church to the poor and the oppressed. This conversion is a permanent process conditioned by the economic, social, and political context. Apart from a change in social structures, there is no authentic conversion.

Gutiérrez sees spirituality as a gift from God. It is an experience of grace in the fellowship between God and man. Prayer is an experience of this gratuitousness which liberates us from religious alienation and, in the final

analysis, from all alienation. Bonhoffer said that 'the only believable God is the God of the mystics', but Gutiérrez comments that this God is not alienated from history.[15] We go to God through man. The 'union with God' proclaimed by all spirituality is not supposed to be a separation from men on the part of the one seeking for that union. To attain union with God it is necessary to go through man. At the same time in that union the Christian discovers more of man's fulness. The experience of grace leads the believer, in the opinion of Gutiérrez, to the synthesis found in Christ. 'In the God-Man we find God and man.'[16] The major Christological emphasis of liberation theology is on the humanity of Jesus.

Even where the reader disagrees with the ideas of Gutiérrez on Christian spirituality, the fact remains that liberation theology cannot be reduced to sociology or ethics. In his book entitled *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, Gutiérrez underscores spirituality in relation to liberation theology. 'The Spiritual Journey of a People' is the subtitle of his book.[17]

The Jesuit theologian Juan Hernández Pico, who is deeply committed to liberation theology, indicates that this theology is the fruit of a spirituality of liberation. Revolutionary action has to be related to spirituality. Christians are supposed to be loyal both to the Word of God read in the light of contemporary history (what is happening today) and to the cause of the oppressed. True spirituality presupposes personal holiness, and there is no genuine holiness unless we follow Jesus as he is revealed in the Gospels. Holiness and prayer go together. In his life of prayer Jesus demonstrated his absolute dependence on the Father. Human action, liberating action included, is limited. To pray is imperative, even when action seems to be the most urgent demand for the liberation of the poor. Action has to be supported by prayer.

At the same time Hernández Pico points out that we need now a new type of holiness and a new type of prayer. Holiness and prayer have to be closely related to the social dimension of salvation. The Spanish mystic San Juan de la Cruz spoke of his spiritual itinerary through 'the dark night of the soul'. The oppressed people are going now through the dark night of structural injustice. In the midst of the struggle for liberation it is indispensable to pray in solidarity with the poor.[18] Frei Betto, another Catholic theologian who has opted for the cause of the oppressed, is concerned about the danger of secularization in the liberation process.

Because of the many demands for immediate action, the pastoral agent may not have time to pray. It is not easy to get together pastoral praxis and a life of prayer. The pastoral agent has to learn how to relate political rationality to spirituality.[19]

Frei Betto suggests that, if the church of the poor really wants to rescue the church as a whole, the essential elements of Christian spirituality and ecclesiastical identity have to be restored. Among these elements, the liturgy and mystical experience are prominent. In the 'base communities', the pastoral agents should avoid the risk of reducing the pastoral ministry to a political task, considering the church as 'a political superparty'.[20]

In the opinion of Frei Betto, in the act of praying, the Word of God and his love are perceived and received. Faith is liberated from ideology in the measure in which the Holy Spirit prays in us (Romans 8:26–27).[21]

The emphasis on the spirituality of liberation aims to answer the criticism

that liberation theology magnifies physical and material prosperity at the expense of the spiritual dimension of salvation. It is also a warning against the risk of losing spiritual integrity in the commitment to the cause of the oppressed. Evidently, liberation theology may become reductive in its revolutionary approach to social problems. Political action may absorb the interest, the time, and the efforts of the identified with the poor in the struggle for liberation.

In view of these problems, the emphasis on spirituality is appreciated. But from the Evangelical standpoint, big problems remain. To say, for instance, that this theology is derived from the struggle of liberation is not enough for those Christians who prefer to see doctrine and praxis submitted to the authority of God's written revelation. It is necessary to know the roots and foundation of spirituality. Spirituality by itself may become too subjective. To know and obey the testimony of the Scriptures is the best safeguard against subjectivism in the Christian life.

The spirituality of liberation is in danger of becoming ideologised on behalf of a particular social class. The impression is often given in liberation theology that to be a real Christian it is indispensable to embrace a leftist political system. Political spirituality and political prayer are a part of the new theological movement in Latin America. Some liberation theologians seem to expect us to pray in subjection to the political left. But we do not have to ideologise our faith in order to pursue social changes that would benefit the poor. The Bible has a great deal to say on human dignity, social justice, and total liberation.

D. Spirituality and Charismatism

The charismatic movement offers to fill the spiritual vacuum of thousands of Latin Americans who profess to be Catholic. Charismatism is one of the varieties of Roman Catholicism today. It is also called Catholic Pentecostalism, because the people involved in this movement claim to have received the Pentecostal baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The modern charismatic movement among Catholics was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1966. In their book on Catholic Pentecostals, Kevin and Dorothy Ranaghan say that the experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, followed by the gifts of the Spirit and recognised and organised as such, was unknown in American Catholicism until 1967.[22] In ten years the movement multiplied from a handful of peole to hundreds of thousands of adherents. Edward D. O'Connor, an American charismatic priest, says that, from an historical and phenomenological point of view, Catholic charismaticism 'is only one branch of a much larger movement affecting all Christian churches'.[23] But it would be a mistake to identify Catholic charismatism with denominational Pentecostalism.

The leaders of the Catholic Church are trying to keep the Catholic charismatic movement within the Church. Nevertheless, some groups of charismatic Catholics are more or less independent of their Church. They do not seem to be in complete agreement with the charismatic movement controlled by the hierarchy.

Catholic charismatics are interested in reading and studying the Bible. It is beyond any doubt that many of them have been saved as a result of being

exposed to the written Word of God. They claim to accept the lordship of Christ in their lives and give great emphasis to the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

There are Catholic charismatics who believe that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is an experience subsequent to the sacrament of baptism. O'Connor insists that to 'be baptised in the Holy Spirit does not mean to receive the sacrament of baptism through the pouring of water over one's head . . . The baptism in the Holy Spirit is something that happens to them often many years after they have been sacramentally baptized.'[24] It is O'Connor's conviction that 'the expression "baptism in the Holy Spirit", does not imply that the Spirit was not given through the sacrament of baptism'.[25]

The British pastor Michael Harper, who is in sympathy with Pentecostals and Catholic charismatics, identifies four positions taken in contemporary Christianity in relation to the baptism in the Holy Spirit.[26] Catholic charismatics generally prefer to speak of 'the baptism of the Holy Spirit' as an experience subsequent to water baptism. O'Connor affirms, '. . . besides the hidden communication of the Holy Spirit which occurs through the sacrament of baptism, there is also a manifest communication that may occur later, and which is here vividly described as the Holy Spirit "falling upon" a person.'[27]

Among Catholic charismatics there is also the belief that the baptism in the Spirit is often manifested by the reception of some charism, especially the gift of tongues.[28]

Of course, prayer is emphasised. O'Connor explains that the 'spiritual experience of those who have been touched by the grace of the Holy Spirit in the Pentecostal movement is in profound harmony with the classical spiritual theology of the Church'.[29] At the same time he sees a significant difference betweeen traditional spirituality and the one enjoyed by those who have shared the Pentecostal experience. Traditional spirituality put the accent on practice: the *presence* of God is a goal to be striven for but difficult to attain. Pentecostal spirituality gives emphasis to the *presence*. It seems 'to start with the experiential awareness of God's presence as the root which enlivens and gives its characteristic notes to all their prayer, love and spirituality'.[30]

The charismatic experience has produced significant changes in the lives of many people who have discovered the joy of addressing themselves directly to God in spontaneous prayer. But most Catholic charismatics have not abandoned their Marian devotion. Apparently they continue to believe in her intercession on their behalf. At least some of them say that one of the results of their charismatic experience has been an increase in their love for Mary. They venerate her as never before. Among many charismatics, Mary is considered to be the highest example of a charismatic person. On the day of Pentecost she was baptised in the Spirit and spoke in tongues.

However, it is also true that in their spiritual life many Catholic charismatics are eager to believe God, taking his promises by faith. They represent a strong pietistic movement within the Roman Catholic Church. They are still Catholic, and many of them are more Catholic than ever.

In evaluating the Catholic charismatic movement, the Declaration of the American Catholic Bishops (1972) speaks against the dangers of emotionalism, anti-intellectualism, ecumenical indifferentism, and gnosticism, *i.e.* the tendency to consider the charismatic group as a privileged elite within the Church.[31] It is evident that the main concern of the charismatic renewal movement has been experiential rather than theological. Emotions have

played the most important role in this movement. Consequently, there is the danger of subjectivism. The inward voice of the heart speaks louder than the external voice of the written Word of God. When experiences or spectacular gifts are overemphasised, there is also the danger of pride. Some people may go to extremes in their desires to have supernatural experiences. They may even attempt to manipulate the Godhead in order to see a miracle.

From a sociological standpoint, it has been pointed out the charismatic movement is strongly individualistic, isolated from Latin American socio-political reality. Charismatics may speak of the Kingdom of God as a present reality, but they are still secluding themselves in their super-spiritual experiences. It is worth noting that, generally speaking, charismatism was born as a middle class movement in Latin America. Because of their middle class mentality, many charismatics identify their new spiritual experience with financial success. Charismatic meetings may also become a way to escape from the complicated problems of our society.

This brief survey of Roman Catholic spirituality in Latin America has revealed that there is a variety of concepts, attitudes and practices. This variety can be found even in religious orders and institutions. Traditional popular religion may be the visible aspect of Roman Catholicism in several Latin American countries. One of the new trends in the post-conciliar Church is that of relating spirituality to social problems. This is done not only as an act of charity or social assistance, but also out of strong motivation for a radical transformation of our society. The spirituality of liberation is at the present time promoted especially among the poor through the 'Christian base communities'.

The charismatic movement may help to counterbalance in contemporary Catholicism an excessive and reductionistic emphasis on social and political liberation. On the other hand, the charismatic movement as such cannot guarantee that the people will really grasp the meaning of the New Testament gospel, or experience a genuine conversion to Christ as the only Mediator between God and man. It is true that many charismatics have finally come to a clear understanding of the gospel through reading and studying the Scriptures. However the majority of Catholic charismatics seem to be more faithful than ever to the distinctive doctrines and practices of the Roman Church as a result of their 'charismatic experience'.

III. SPIRITUALITY AND PRAYER IN LATIN AMERICAN EVANGELICALISM

Generally speaking, much of the Latin American Evangelical spirituality comes from classical Prostestant pietism, from the Prostestant revivals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, both in Europe and in North America, and from the modern Pentecostal movement. Some observers of the Latin American religious scene have said that about eighty percent of Evangelicals in these countries are Pentecostal.

Diversity is one of the main characteristics of Latin American Evangelicalism. There are, for instance, immigrant churches, historical or denominational churches, independent or national churches, 'faith missions' churches, and, of course, Pentecostal churches. There is also diversity in each of these groups.

It is true that most Latin American Evangelicals belong to different branches of the Pentecostal movement. But very few leaders who are able to articulate their faith in academic terms as theologians, belong to the majority groups in Latin American Evangelicalism. A profound study of our Evangelical spirituality is waiting to be done. For the purpose of this paper special reference will be made to the spirituality of the vast majority of Evangelicals in Latin America, including Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal churches. But generalisations have to be avoided. There is diversity in the different ecclesiastical groups, even in the local churches of Latin American Evangelicalism.

A. Non-Pentecostal Spirituality

(1) Traditional Evangelical spirituality has tried to be biblical. Its main point of reference is what the Holy Scriptures teach on the Christian life. It has been said that 'Protestant saints are people and products of the Book . . . Their lives are built on the foundation of the Word.'[32]

(2) Traditional Evangelical spirituality is trinitarian. To be spiritual is to be holy as the Father is holy (1 Peter 1:15–16). The emphasis is also Christological. To be conformed to the image of the Son of God is the goal of spirituality (Rom. 8:29). Therefore, it is indispensable to grow in the knowledge of him (2 Peter 3:18) and to follow him as our highest example of spirituality (Mt. 11:28–30; 1 John 2:6; 1 Peter 2:21). In the final analysis, spirituality is the life produced and controlled by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18). More important than the gifts of the Spirit is his fruit. In this view of spirituality the major emphasis is placed on Christian character and conduct rather than on ability and service. It is considered as well that an excessive emphasis on the charismata may be conducive to pride. The antidote to pride is authentic Christian love (1 Cor. 13).

Dr. Francisco Lacueva, a Spanish Evangelical and former Catholic priest, has written a book on Christian spirituality. His basic thesis is that this spirituality is the work of the three persons of the Holy Trinity. Spirituality is the result of the indwelling presence of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit in the believer.[33]

(3) In traditional Evangelicalism, examples of spirituality are primarily drawn from the Bible. Mention has been made of the example *par excellence*, the Lord Jesus Christ. Extra-biblical models are found in famous missionaries such as Hudson Taylor and David Brainerd and other pious Christians who spent their lives serving the Lord in a sacrificial way. Prayer had a preeminent place in the daily experience of those Christians.

A. J. Gordon says that 'David Brainerd did his greatest work by Prayer. He was in the depths of the forests alone, unable to speak the language of the Indians, but he spent whole days in prayer'.[34] Hudson Taylor 'had many secrets for his spiritual life, for he was going on with God, yet they were but one – the simple, profound secret of drawing for every need, temporal or spiritual, upon "the fathomless wealth of Christ" '.[35] This he did in the spirit of prayer.

Sometimes the example of these pious Christians is so exalted that the impression is given that the privilege of being spiritual is reserved for a few selected believers. If such were the case, there would be no difference between Evangelicals and those Catholics who regard monastics as the only

people who are able to live on a higher level of spirituality. Even amongst Catholics there is a reaction against this limited view of spirituality. For instance, the Spanish mystic St. Teresa of Avila believed that God is also walking in the midst of the most common and humble circumstances of life. According to the Scriptures, nothing is outside the realm of his sovereignty and divine action. Consequently, to be spiritual means also to walk with God day by day in the power of the Holy Spirit, in obedience to his Word.

Another problem related to Evangelical spirituality has been that of legalism. There are Evangelical churches in Latin America that pay more attention to 'traditions' of the beloved missionary pioneers than to the Word of God. Jewels and 'masculine clothes' are forbidden to women at any time. Christians are not supposed to become members of a political party, much less to participate in elections as candidates for public office. Some Christians have been excommunicated from the local church because of their political involvement.

One of the characteristics of legalism is its tendency to establish rules that are not in harmony with the spirit and contents of God's written revelation. This is what many Pharisees did in Jesus' time. Legalism overemphasises the external, overlooking that God looks upon the heart. Motivations are more important than actions in his sight. The Lord Jesus rejected the spirituality of the Pharisees who opposed him because they invalidated the Scriptures with their traditions.

(4) Basically, Latin American Evangelicals have been taught a biblical doctrine of prayer. They strongly believe in personal and extemporaneous prayer. Recitation of the Lord's prayer may be a part of the liturgy in some instances, but this practice does not exclude extemporaneous prayer during corporate services. Most evangelicals avoid the mechanical repetition of prayers.

In Evangelical teaching, prayer is trinitarian. The believers address the Father, in the name of the Son, under the ministry of the Holy Spirit (Mt. 6:9–13; John 14:13–14; 16:23–24; Rom. 8:26–27).

According to Evangelical teaching, the ministry of prayer is based on the mediation of Christ, who as High Priest presented himself in sacrifice for our sins, opening a new way to the Father. Because of the mediatorial work of the Son, the believer now has free access to the Father. The Son is at the right hand of God in heaven interceding for his own. Consequently, there is no need of other mediators between God and men. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only Mediator the believer needs in order to gain access to the presence of the Father. The context of 2 Timothy 2:5, which teaches the exclusive mediation of Christ, is public prayer.

Evangelical teaching also emphasises that faith is indispensable for effective prayer (James 5:16–18; 1:5–8). At the same time, the believer has to submit himself always to the will of God, knowing that this will is 'good' and 'perfect' (Rom. 12:2) and that 'in all things God works for the good to those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose' (Rom. 8:28). Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane is the highest example of submission to the Father in prayer.

Non-Pentecostal Evangelicals have been taught that God answers their prayers always, but he does it in more than one way. His answers include 'yes', 'no' and 'wait'. God can perform miracles but his purpose is not always to do so. According to Mark's account, a leper came to Jesus saying to him,

'If you are willing, you can make me clean.' Jesus was moved with compassion and said to him, 'I am willing, be cleansed.' The Gospel account tells us, 'Immediately, the leprosy left him and he was cured' (Mark 1:41).

Vincent Taylor and others rightly insist that this passage does not express doubt on the part of the leper but confidence in the fact that Jesus was able to act.[36] The leper was respectful in his request; he was not demanding a miracle. He did not say, 'I believe you, and because of my faith you have to make me clean.' He knew how to pray in submission to the Lord.

There are also cases in the New Testament and in the experience of the church today where the Lord has not performed a miracle. It is interesting to note that Paul does not advise Timothy to pray for divine healing but to take 'a little wine to help your digestion since you are ill so often' (1 Tim. 5:23, GNB). It is the Lord who heals all our diseases (Ps. 103:3). Sometimes he does so using human means; at other times he performs a miracle according to his sovereign will. This summarises the teaching of non-Pentecostal Evangelicals in Latin America.

In traditional Evangelical churches prayer meetings have not always attracted large numbers of people. At the present time there are middle class churches that have meetings only on Sunday morning. Congregational prayers are very few. There is a tendency among Evangelicals to put the emphasis on orthodox prayer, or praying in harmony with correct doctrine. But they are afraid to pour out their soul freely in praise and thanksgiving to the Lord. The emotions are so restricted by the intellect that prayer may become just another theological discourse. In such instances a real substitute is not provided for the emotional experience of those who say their prayers before the image of a saint at home, or in a Catholic place of worship.

The prayers of the apostle Paul in the New Testament are the expression of his innermost feelings in the presence of God. Paul prayed as a theologian and as a human being under the ministry of the Spirit and the Word.

To have a correct doctrine of prayer is not enough. To pray is much more than a theological exercise or a liturgical act. To pray is to enter God's presence, worshipping him with thanksgiving and praise, talking to him as a child talks to his father about his or her own needs and the needs of others, whether they be Christians or non-Christians.

Paul says that we are to 'Pray continually' (1 Thess. 5:17). This apostolic injunction may mean we are to live in an atmosphere of prayer. There is a great difference between discussing prayer and praying as the Lord wants us to do it.

(5) Generally speaking, Evangelical teaching on prayer, not to mention the actual practice of prayer among Evangelicals in Latin America, may be judged lacking in social concern from the standpoint of contemporary theology. It is also true that most of the prayers abound in requests for material blessings.

However, liberation theologians would say that those prayers are still too individualistic. Furthermore, liberation theologians would say that Evangelicals are concerned about the effects of underdevelopment, not its causes. Prayer has political implications in liberation theology. In other words, it is necessary to pray for the transformation of social structures and for the establishment of a new social order. In their prayers, Christians have to take sides with the poor.

It is evident that we Latin American Evangelicals have not been taught this

emphasis in prayer. Once in while we may pray for the government, for the needs of the poor, and for world peace. But we will not ask in public for a change in government, although deep in our hearts we may do it when religious freedom is restricted. The problem of social injustice has not been a subject of prayer in the Evangelical community as a whole. We pray for those who are in authority 'that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness' (1 Tim. 2:1–2), as the apostle says. But we may overlook the fact that a life of 'godliness and holiness' has social implications, and that Paul goes on to say that God 'wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth' (1 Tim. 2:4). Salvation in Christ and the knowledge of the truth have tremendous social implications. Jesus said, 'the truth will set you free' (John 8:32) — free from sin, from any kind of sin, from personal and social sin.

On the other hand, there is an abysmal difference between praying for the total salvation of man and praying for the success of a political ideology. When the gospel is politicised, prayer too becomes political, at the service of a particular ideology. It does not matter whether the ideology is inclined to the right or to the left.

As never before, we Evangelicals in Latin America have to pray for the Lord's help to keep our Christian identity as we show our social concern in the midst of a society which is already going through a process of change.

B. Pentecostal Spirituality

To some extent, modern Pentecostalism is a reaction to a church which, generally speaking, had not been sensitive enough in practice to the person and work of the Holy Spirit. A segment of American Protestantism was plagued by liberalism. Many conservative Evangelicals were spending their energies strengthening their orthodoxy and fighting the liberals. Meanwhile, two Evangelical movements were growing in the American scene — the 'Bible' churches and Pentecostalism. These two movements have played an important role in the expansion of Evangelicalism in Latin America.

One of the reasons for the extraordinary growth of Pentecostalism in these countries is its effective appeal to the Latin soul. Pentecostal spirituality has been more attractive to the masses than the formality of traditional Evangelicalism. Pentecostalism has provided the people with some of the elements offered by Catholicism: *e.g.* miraculous healing in answer to prayer, with the difference that in Pentecostalism the healer is not an image or a saint, but God himself.

Sociological studies have been done to explain the growth of the Pentecostal movement in Latin America. One noteworthy example is *The Haven of the Masses*, by Lalive d'Epinay.[37] There are also ecclesiastical and missiological reasons for that growth, but it is not the purpose of this paper to discuss that subject. Suffice it to say that Pentecostalism came to underscore the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer, holding particularly to the believer's baptism in the Spirit as an experience subsequent to conversion and to the administration of spectacular gifts like healing, prophecy and tongues. The believer is supposed to ask for these blessings. Prayer as an earnest spiritual exercise enjoys a prominent place in Pentecostalism. Those who are eager to have the Pentecostal experience in their lives may come to the point of 'agonising in prayer', asking for the blessings of the Holy Spirit.

We may not be in agreement with some of the distinctive Pentecostal doctrines and practices, but it is undeniable that Pentecostals challenge us to take seriously the ministry of prayer and to believe truly that our God is the God of miracles. In a world which is becoming more materialistic than ever, not many of us traditional Evangelicals dare to pray seriously for a miracle in our lives or the lives of others.

Pentecostals have done a great deal of good to many Latins, especially among the poor. But generally speaking, their concern has not gone beyond the needs and problems of the individual. As in the case of other conservative Evangelicals in Latin America, Pentecostalism has separated the individual from 'the world', providing him with a new set of social relationships within the Pentecostal community and stimulating him directly or indirectly to be indifferent to the problems of society at large. In this sense, Pentecostalism has become the 'haven of the masses', a place where the individual tries to escape from the problems of society. Pentecostal spirituality may become extremely individualistic, and some of the churches in the Latin American Pentecostal movement are quite legalistic in their attitudes toward the outside world.

Pentecostal spirituality has been deeply conscious of satanic realities. Of course, to believe in the existence of Satan and his demons is in keeping with biblical teaching and Christian tradition. Through the centuries spiritually minded Christians have been aware of Satan, a point powerfully exemplified in Martin Luther's hymn, 'A Mighty Fortress is our God'.

To maintain and express our belief in the existence of the satanic world is necessary, but the social implications of demonic activity are not to be overlooked. Notice should be taken of liberation theologies which de-emphasise satanic influence in their analysis of Latin American problems. For different reasons, both Pentecostalism and liberation theology may overlook the demonic influence on social structures which are characterised by injustice and oppression.

In regard to the demonic world there have been extreme views and practices in some Pentecostal churches in Latin America. There are Pentecostal leaders who believe, for instance, that all physical illness is caused by demons. In their sermons and prayers these pastors seem to be too much concerned about Satan and his work. Exorcism may be prescribed even in cases which beyond any doubt need medical treatment. Sometimes the impression is given that prayer is used as an attempt to manipulate God into providing a miracle of healing. No wonder that such excesses have resulted in serious distortions of biblical teaching on Christian spirituality. But at this point, it is fair to say again that there is in Latin American Protestantism a variety that defies any glib generalisation.

There is also a mainstream Protestant charismatic movement in these countries. The similarities between traditional Pentecostals and Protestant charismatics are evident. Both groups magnify, for instance, the 'Pentecostal experience' which is given by God in response to prayer. Most Pentecostals and Protestant charismatics emphasise the emotional aspects of Christian spirituality. Their major concern is not to understand spirituality, but to feel it. Emotions play the most important role in their spiritual life. But there are also differences between traditional Pentecostals and Prostestant charismatics.

What has been said in this paper about Catholic charismatics may apply to

some extent to Protestant charismatics, although both groups remain faithful to their respective ecclesiastical traditions. One of the distinctives of charismatism, both Catholic and Protestant, is its ecumenical spirit. With some exceptions, historical or traditional Pentecostalism has been non-ecumenical in Latin America. Ecumenicity is a new dimension in Pentecostal spirituality through the charismatic movement, although this ecumenicity is not necessarily the one promoted by the widely known ecumenical movement.

In view of the fact that about eighty percent of Latin American Evangelicals belong to pentecostal or charismatic churches, it is possible to say that Pentecostal spirituality has shaped to a large extent the image projected by Latin American Evangelicalism. Pentecostalism has the virtue of incarnating itself in a variety of cultures. During the last twenty years, the Evangelical charismatic movement has been reaching the middle class and high middle class people of Latin America. Strong national Pentecostal churches have been established. But in a society which is in the process of change, Pentecostalism has to demonstrate its ability to renew itself in response to the revolutionary challenges of our day. To what degree a renewal of Pentecostalism would affect its spirituality remains to be seen. In the meantime, Pentecostal spirituality continues to exercise a significant influence on other churches, especially in the area of public worship.

IV. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

1. Especially since Vatican II, Catholic spirituality has diversified itself more than ever. There is in the Roman Catholic Church a traditional monastic spirituality, and in the other extreme, a spirituality of political liberation. But there is also a charismatic spirituality which challenges Catholics to look for the so-called 'Pentecostal experience', without demanding from them the denial of their distinctive Catholic convictions. It is a spirituality open to fellowship with everybody who claims to be a Christian.

2. It seems that popular religion continues to be the spirituality of the Catholic masses in Latin America; but at the same time, the 'Christian community bases' movement with all of its ecclesiastical, sociological, and even political implications, is growing among the poor in several countries.

3. The Catholic spirituality of liberation is a challenge to Evangelicals at theological and praxiological levels in Latin America.

Traditional Evangelical spirituality has tended to de-emphasise, or even to overlook, social concern. We have usually prayed for the 'peace of the city' apart from a serious concern for the social injustice that makes that peace impossible. But we must not forget the word of warning about the possibility of being naive, praying and acting on behalf of a political ideology instead of praying and working on behalf of our own people for the expansion of God's present kingdom to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. To be deeply rooted in God's written revelation, to be led by the Holy Spirit, and to be in close fellowship with the Evangelical community is indispensable for our Christian spirituality and prayer. Otherwise, we may be misled by our own intellectual pride, by our own uncontrolled feelings, or by our own political option, whatever that option may be. Even in the midst of spiritual darkness, religious confusion, moral disintegration, social turbulence,

and political turmoil, our Christian identity must not be lost. We are not neutral to social problems. We may have our own political option. But as Christians we are expected to be deeply committed to the Lord Jesus Christ, including the commitment to the social implications of the gospel. In this sense, our spirituality does not mean the attempt to evade the world, but to be in the world in the midst of a society in conflict (John 17), serving the Lord Jesus Christ in the church and outside the church.

New Testament spirituality is not monastic. The highest example of spirituality is given by the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, who came to this planet and lived among the people, without contaminating himself with the sin of the world. He dwelt among men, 'full of grace and truth' (John 1:14).

5. Whatever may be said on Christian spirituality, the fact remains that today as ever the church and the world are in great need of men and women really committed to the Lord, men and women who do not only believe in God, but also believe him, taking his Word seriously; men and women who know how to pray, and pray; men and women who know how to exercise their faith and are bold enough to ask knowing that he is able to give them that which they ask in his name, according to his will. The church and the world need, more than ever, men and women who are spiritual according to biblical patterns. The words of E. M. Bounds, written decades ago, are still valid today.

> Men are God's method. The Church is looking for better methods: God is looking for better men . . . What the Church needs today is not more machinery, not new organisations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use — men of prayer, men mighty in prayer . . . It is not great talents or great learning, or great preachers that God needs, but men great in holiness, great in faith, great in love, great in fidelity, great for God men always preaching by holy sermons in the pulpit, by holy lives out of it. These can mould a generation for God.[38]

PART THREE

Some Lessons in Prayer from the World-Wide Church

13

Lessons from the Prayer Habits of the Church in Korea

MYUNG HYUK KIM

As the birth and growth of the Jerusalem church came from scriptural preaching and united prayers (Acts 1:14; 2:42; 6:4), so the Korean church was born and has grown through scriptural preaching and united prayers. This is still her experience. We have witnessed a number of remarkable revivals and rapid church growth brought about in just this way. We are more than grateful to God for this precious spiritual inheritance, seldom found in churches around the world today.

I. THE KOREAN PENTECOST OF 1907 AND THE PRAYER MOVEMENT

It is generally agreed that the revivals of the early 1900s in Korea (the limited revival of 1903, the more general revivals of 1905, and the explosive awakening of 1907) were our 'genuine Pentecost'. They are widely recognised as marking the spiritual birth of the Korean Church.[1] The revivals were wrought through prayers and were themselves characterised by prayer — indeed, by the prayer habits that still flourish in the Korean church.

A. Prayer preceded and was accompanied by the reading of Scripture

In August 1903, a group of seven missionaries including R. A. Hardie engaged in a week of Bible study and prayer at Wonsan in North Korea. From this Bible study and prayer meetings sprang the revival. Similar Bible study and prayer meetings were held in 1905 in North Korea and the more general revivals spread. During August of 1906, various missionaries met at Pyongyang for a week of prayer and of Bible study, led by R. A. Hardie. They studied the First Epistle of John so intensively that they dispensed with social and recreational affairs. It was also customary for representatives of area churches to come together from distant points at the New Year for Bible study ('Sakyung-hoae'). In the New Year of 1907 fifteen hundred men gathered for the Bible study at Chang Dae Hyun Presbyterian Church in Pyongyang, and during the ten day Bible study and prayer meeting the participants experienced intensive, united, audible prayers of confession of sins, and remarkable blessings of 'a genuine Pentecost'. A remarkable feature of the great revival of the year 1907 was the entire absence of fanaticism.

It is often pointed out that this was because the prayer and revival were carefully instructed by the Bible studies.[2]

B. The prayer was characterised by confession of sins and accompanied by transformed lives.

When the seven missionaries met together for a Bible study and prayer meeting in 1903, R. A. Hardie confessed his faults and failures before the missionary body and before the Korean church and it led others to engage in prayers confessing sins. Confession of sins now became an outstanding feature of these early Bible study and prayer meetings. The results of this earliest movement were also seen in the transformation of the lives of church members, whose morality was lifted to a high plane of sincerity and purity, and whose zeal for evangelism was widely manifested.

The intense prayers at the Bible study and prayer meeting in the New Year of 1907 were also characterised by confession of sins. The best description of such prayers was given by William Blair, an eye-witness of 'the Korean Pentecost':

> 'As the prayer continued, a spirit of heaviness and sorrow for sin came down upon the audience. Over on one side, someone began to weep, and in a moment the whole audience was weeping. Mr Lee's account gives the history of that night better than any words can do. 'Man after man would rise, confess his sins, break down and weep, and then throw himself to the floor and beat the floor with his fists in perfect agony of conviction. My own cook tried to make a confession, broke down in the midst of it and cried to me across the room: "Pastor, tell me, is there any hope for me, can I be forgiven?" and then he threw himself to the floor and wept and wept, and wept, and almost screamed in agony. Sometimes after a confession, the whole audience would break out in audible prayer, and the effect of that audience of hundreds of men praying together in audible prayer was something indescribable. Again, after another confession, they would break out in uncontrollable weeping and we would all weep, we could not help it . . . [Mr Kim, an elder] turning to me said, "Can you forgive me, can you pray for me?" I [W. Blair] stood up and began to pray, "Apa-ge, Apa-ge" (Father, Father) and we got no further. It seemed as if the roof was lifted from the building and I fell at Kim's side and wept and prayed as I had never prayed before.'[3]

The intense prayer was not only the prayer of confession and tears but the prayer that produced transformed lives. Blair describes it in this way: 'All through the city men were going from house to house confessing to individuals they had injured, returning stolen property and money, not only to Christians but to heathen as well, till the whole city was stirred. A Chinese merchant was astonished to have a christian walk in and pay him a large sum of money that he had obtained unjustly years before.'[4]

C. The prayer was audible and offered in unison

As already described above another notable feature of this early prayer, in addition to its intensity, was the fact that it was audible and in unison. Blair describes the prayer at the Bible study and prayer meeting in the New Year of 1907 as follows:

> After a short sermon, Mr Lee took charge of the meeting and called for prayers. So many began praying that Mr Lee said, 'If you want to pray like that, all pray,' and the whole audience began to pray out loud, all together. The effect was indescribable — not confusion, but a vast harmony of soul and spirit, a mingling together of souls moved by an irresistible impulse of prayer. The prayer sounded to me like the falling of many waters, an ocean of prayer beating against God's throne.[5]

D. Prayer was commonly at daybreak and over-night.

The daybreak prayer and over-night prayer on the mountain hills were two other phenomena and results of the great revival of 1907. An American evangelist who made an extensive visit during the revival years reported the prayer life of the Korean Christians in the following words:

> The Koreans are praying for souls with an intense and simple faith which puts to shame those of us in Christian lands. Last winter during some revival meetings in Songdo, it was a common thing for christians to go out on the hills after the evening meetings and kneel on the frozen ground while they cried to God for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. At Chai Ryung at 5.30 each morning several Koreans came to the house of the missionary with whom I was staying to spend an hour in prayer with him. At Pyongyang pastor Kil (Sun Ju) and an elder were in the habit of meeting at the church for prayer at dawn each morning. Others heard of it and asked permission to meet with them. Mr Kil announced that any who wished might pray with them a few days at 4.30 a.m. The next morning people began gathering at 1 a.m.; at 2 a.m. a large number were present; and at 4.30 a.m. over 400 had assembled.[6]

E. Prayer was offered in times of difficulty and despair.

Why were there great revivals and intense prayer movements in the 1900s? Numerous reasons might be presented. But one definite reason for the revivals and prayer movements was the suffering and hopelessness which the Korean people experienced. Blair points out this brokenness as a cause of the spiritual movement.

> It is pitiable to see them grieve, to see strong men weep over national loss. They come to us and say, 'Is there any country so poor, so unfortunate as ours?' But it means much that their eyes are open. Formerly they were proud and arrogant; they were 'wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked', and knew it not. Now, with respect to this world, at least, they know just where they stand. They know they are despised and rejected. The arrow had entered Korea's soul. Her spirit was broken. For years now she has been sitting in the dust, mourning not only her present misfortunes, but her past sins. Over just such a stricken people has God so often stretched out his hands in blessing. By brokenness of spirit Korea has been prepared for the Gospel.[7]

II. THE LATER REVIVALS AND THE PRAYER MOVEMENT

The Korean church experienced similar revivals and prayer movements to those of the 1900s in the following several decades. They continue even now, and the special features of the early prayers continue to be firmly established.

In 1927 a revival began in Seoul under a young Methodist minister, Lee Yong Do. When Lee Yong Do was delivering the Word of God in the Central Methodist Church in Pyongyang he was compelled to suspend preaching, because the congregation had stopped listening to him, but were repenting and confessing their sins before God. One day while he was reading John 14–18 the congregation broke into prayer.[8] Once again the prayer was accompanied by Scriptural preaching and resulted in confession of sins.

In 1928 revivals spread throughout various parts of Korea. Prayer and intercession abounded. In one place (Yundukwon) the Christians fasted and prayed for seven weeks before beginning evangelistic services. A night of prayer provoked heart-searching among believers, who later spent three hours confessing their faults and asking mutual forgiveness. The prayer was intense, an all-night vigil of fasting and of confession of sins.

In 1929 a Forward Movement of the Presbyterian Church of Korea was begun with three days of 'meetings of consecration' in each of twenty-two presbyteries. These were daybreak meetings for prayer, with other gatherings at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., and rallies in the evening. The leaders scattered to their churches and repeated the three days of consecration in every one of the 2,600 churches in Korea. More than 1,200 people attended the daybreak prayer meetings in Pyongyang in November 1929.[9] The prayer was the daybreak prayer.

After the liberation of Korea in 1945 from the Japanese occupation the North Korean church fell again under oppression, this time Communist. Under this Communist oppression a revival began in North Korea under Lee Sung Bong, a Holiness Church evangelist. This was marked by repentance, weeping and confession. The revival began to spread, but the Christian leaders were being arrested in 1946, and many, including Lee Sung Bong, escaped to South Korea. Yet a great spirit of prayer possessed the suffering Christians in North Korea. The prayer was the prayer of repentance under the Communist régime.

In the spring of 1947, forty pastors gathered in Pyongyang for prayer, and discussed the matter of revival. They voted to hold forty days prayer meeting in each of the churches, starting March 1, an early morning and an evening prayer meeting in each church. During the forty days of prayer meetings, most churches experienced a great revival. Again during the first week of April, a united prayer meeting was held at Chang Dae Hyun Church and experienced even greater awakening. Three hundred people spent two days and nights in the church in united prayer of agonising intercession. More than ten thousand people gathered in mass prayer meetings. The revival of 1947 spread throughout North Korea. In spite of increasing persecution, churches continued to grow until 1950, when the Korean War began. Then revival began in the South.[10] In short, this was the united mass prayer of intercession in times of difficulty.

The revival in the South was sparked by the northern refugees before and after the Korean War. Not only in Seoul, but in Taegu and other cities, a vast movement began of people wanting to pray. Robert Finley, an American visitor to Korea in 1950, reported the prayer movement in the following terms: 'It came as a shock to me to find Korean believers meeting for prayer every day at 5 a.m. I had never seen such discipline in America, nor had I seen such devotion to the Lord as when hundreds of persons continued all

night on their knees in pure worship.' Finley reluctantly addressed a prayer conference on Sam Kak mountain and one day spoke to the intercessors at 4 p.m. after which a thousand people scattered to prayer groups to pray and fast all night; so they continued for three days and two nights.[11] This prayer was of the over-night and daybreak variety and was characterised by fasting and intercession.

The revivals and prayer movements continued even into the 1950s and 1960s. But the post-War revivals and prayer movement tended increasingly to be rather emotionally, mystically, and eschatologically oriented under the leadership of certain charismatic revivalists such as Park Tae Sun and Na Un Mong. The revivals and prayers came to be seen as the means by which to seek comfort and assurance in the days of difficulties and insecurity. Many sought and went to the prayer mountains. By the 1970s and 1980s, however, the revivals and prayers tended to be viewed as the means by which to seek material and physical well-being in this world. These are the days of gradual economic prosperity, and many Christians have fallen under the influence of such evangelists as Yonggi Cho and Robert Schuller. The influence of Yonggi Cho has been remarkable throughout the Korean Church regardless of denominational boundaries, though his influence is somewhat diminishing recently partly owing to the criticism of it from some evangelical churches: cf. the Addendum to this chapter.

Looking back on the history of revivals and prayer movements in Korea we easily see that they began and continued in times of difficulty, and were characterised by Scripture reading and confession of sins, producing transformed lives of purity and evangelism. Prayer was generally intense, united, and audible.

III. MEN OF PRAYER

A. The Revd Kil Sun Ju (1869–1935)

One of the most outstanding men of prayer the Korean Church ever produced was the Revd Kil Sun Ju who was born in Anju, North Korea in 1869, spent his teenage years as a prodigal, and was then drawn to the teaching of Zen Buddhism. Disappointed in Zen Buddhism, he was converted to Christianity in 1897 when he was 29. He was ordained as an elder in 1901, became an 'assistant' in 1902 and then went to the Pyongyang Presbyterian Seminary in 1903. After graduation from the Seminary in 1907 he became one of the first seven Korean ministers.[12]

Mr Kil developed into a man of prayer soon after he became a Christian. As an elder he prayed regularly, setting a certain time to pray, at daybreak, at noon, and at night. This regular, set-time prayer was regarded as coming from his Zen practices for three years. Even the posture and manner of his prayer were similar to those of Zen practices. To Mr Kil, however, prayer was more than religious practices, but a means and time of spiritual fellowship with God. There was something distinctively mysterious in his prayer.

The habit of daybreak prayer in the Korean Church is generally regarded as stemming from the practices of Mr Kil. When he was working as an assistant ('Cho-sa') at Chang Dae Hyun Presbyterian Church in 1906 he began to pray,

with an elder (Mr Park), at daybreak and received a great blessing in a month; and the Church soon decided to have daybreak prayer meetings regularly every morning. At 4.00 a.m. the bell rang and the believers gathered to join the 4.30 a.m. daybreak prayer meeting at Chang Dae Hyun Church to confess sins and to pray for revival. This was the beginning of the daybreak prayer of the Korean church. Mr Kil also started to ring the bell at noon every day and had the believers pray the noon prayer wherever they were.

There were displays of power and miracles accompanying Mr Kil's prayer. Incurable diseases were healed in answer to his prayer. Once when he was leading an evangelistic meeting in Kimchun he was praying for rain in time of drought. There was heavy rain, and it was even called the 'Kil rain'; 'Kil' means 'good'. There was always power in his message and ministry, for they were bathed in prayer. His prayer was the prayer of life and death struggle.

Another distinctive feature of the Revd Kil's prayer life was that his daybreak prayer was always followed by recitation of the book of Revelation for twenty minutes. Thus he was able to recite the book of Revelation more than ten thousand times in his life. It was also reported that he was able to read the books from Genesis to Esther more than five hundred times. Whenever he led an evangelistic meeting he taught the book of Revelation in the mornings. This became a model of the evangelistic meeting.

When he was imprisoned for one year because he had signed the Independence Declaration of 1919, the Revd Kil spent most of his time in prayer, Bible reading and recitation.

B. The Revd Choo Kee Chul (1897–1944)

The Revd Choo Kee Chul was another outstanding man of prayer the Korean church produced. Mr Choo was born in UngChun, Kyungnam province, South Korea in 1897 as the fourth son of an elder. At the loss of the nation to Japan in 1910 Mr Choo was more than resentful. He received Christian and patriotic education at Osan middle and high school and was influenced by such famous national patriotic leaders as Lee Seung Hoon and Cho Man Shik. When he was twenty he went to Yunhee Christian College in Seoul but was forced to withdraw because of a severe eye disability. In despair, he attended an evangelistic meeting led by a well-known evangelist, Kim Ik Doo. At a daybreak prayer meeting Kim Ik Doo delivered a message exhorting people to 'Receive the Holy Spirit', and on hearing the message Choo repented of his sins and experienced conversion. He also heard the messages of such men of prayer as Kil Sun Ju and Lee Ki Sun and was greatly impressed.[13]

In 1921 he went to the Pyongyang Presbyterian Seminary and after graduation became a minister of Choryang Presbyterian Church in Pusan in 1926. The Church experienced remarkable growth through his ministry of Word and prayer. He was praying regularly at dawn and stressed the importance of the daybreak prayers, insisting that it was at dawn that believers received great blessing. He himself never missed daybreak prayer in his life. The Revd Choo also often prayed throughout the night on the Kooduck mountain, reminding himself of the Lord's prayer at Gethsemane. He devoted Friday and Saturday to special prayers for the message which he prepared from Monday through Friday. It was from his chamber of prayers that his powerful ministry was energised. He used to say that the Korean

people should be outstanding in religious piety and he devoted himself wholeheartedly to prayer and Scripture reading.

In 1931 he moved from Pusan to Masan to become a minister of the Moon Chang Presbyterian Church. This Church also experienced remarkable blessing through his ministry of Word and prayer. He often prayed throughout the night on the Moohak mountain. Every one of his messages was created out of his agonising prayer ministry and manifested great power. In 1936 he moved to Pyongyang to become the minister of the famous Sanjunghyun Presbyterian Church. Here he devoted his life to prayer and led the nation-wide campaign against the Japanese enforcement of Shinto shrine worship. He declared that the Sanjunghyun Church would never participate in Shinto shrine worship and would fight against it to the last. The Japanese oppression was increasing. In the summer of 1938 he went to Myohyang mountain to offer special prayers and to fast with two of his friends. He also used to go to the Moranbong mountain in Pyongyang for over-night intercession. After prayer he used to spend one hour studying the Scriptures. He was crying to God, 'O Lord, if I fall, the Korean Church would fall.' The Revd Choo was regarded as the only successor in the Korean Church to the recently deceased Revd Kil Sun Ju.

Just before the general assembly of the Korean Presbyterian Church stated to be held in September of 1938, at which the Japanese police planned to force the assembly to pass a motion justifying Shinto shrine worship, the Revd Choo was arrested, for he was resolutely opposed to such a plan. He was released shortly after the general assembly which, under heavy police threat, was forced to pass the motion, and then again imprisoned for about seven years until he was martyred in prison in 1944. During the brief period when the Revd Choo was released and allowed to come home and visit his Church for three days in February of 1939 he expressed his firm determination to fight against Shintoism, confessing that he would continue to pray for the Korean church even in heaven after his death. And to the crowded congregation of his Church he delivered a moving message entitled 'Five items of my prayer'. The five items of his prayer constituted the burden of his praying during his long imprisonment. They are as follows: 1. Help me to conquer the power of death. 2. Help me to endure the long suffering. 3. I commit my elderly mother, my wife and children, and my congregation to the Lord. 4. Help me to live and die in righteousness. 5. I commit my soul to the Lord.[14] After lengthy suffering in prison the Revd Choo died on April 21, 1944. His last word was his prayer, 'God of my soul, hold me firm'.

One of the Revd Choo's challenging messages was entitled 'The Holy Spirit and Prayer', and the main contents of it have been summarised as follows: The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of prayer. Prayer is all important and all indispensable to believers. Prayer is controlled only by the Spirit. Sometimes we experience prayer that is overflowing like a fountain from our heart. Such a prayer is not man-made but a Spirit-controlled prayer. A religious man without prayer could be a religious philosopher but not a man with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit opens our confused heart and prays for the believers according to the will of God. Prayer is made not only in quietness but also in repeating loudly only 'Father, Father, Father', when you are in great difficulties of darkness. If anyone who does not know the Spirit, dwell with him and have a life of prayer.[15]

C. The Revd Son Yang Won (1902–1950)

The Revd Son Yang Won, the hero of *The Atomic Bomb of Love* or *The Seed Must Die*,[16] is one of the most widely known and the most treasured men of faith in the memory of Korean Christians. He is especially remembered for his surpassing love and forgiveness toward an enemy who shot and killed two of his dear sons during the Communist riot and takeover of the Yue-Soon area in the southern part of Korea in 1948. The Revd Son was, however, in the first place a man of prayer. It was because he was a man of prayer that he could become 'an apostle of love'.

The boyhood of Son Yang Won was nurtured in a devout Christian family where the daybreak prayer and family devotion were regularly practised. From his boyhood Son devoted himself to prayer and he was particularly keen on observing the Lord's Day. When he was attending a middle school he spent much of his time in evangelism on the street and in prayer at night in such quiet places as a cemetery. The Revd Son was imprisoned from 1940 to 1945 for his strong opposition to Shintoism but he spent much of the time in prayer and thanksgiving. When he was in prison he wrote and exhorted his first son Tong In to devote himself to pray: 'First devote yourself to prayer and the Scriptures and then to the reading of good books.' To his parents he had written in these words: 'Please do not neglect family devotion. Please devote yourself to prayer, attending church worship and Bible reading.'

When two of his sons were shot to death in 1948 the Revd Son went to the Church to pray. He thanked God for allowing him to become the father of two martyred sons. Then he prayed for the youth who shot his sons. After the riot was over and the area under control the Revd Son pleaded with the authorities to spare the life of the youth and took him to his parents and prayed for them in earnest. The youth repented and was converted.

When the Korean War broke out in 1950 the Rev. Son determined to protect to the last the Aeyangwon (home for lepers) of which he was the director-chaplain and began to lead special prayers, periods of over-night prayer and fasting. He also led special prayer meetings three times a day and encouraged the Christian lepers to meet martyrdom boldly for the other 30 million Koreans. The Revd Son often spent the whole night in tearful prayers; he then proved faithful to his own exhortation. He was martyred by the Communists. In his last breath after he was shot he prayed for the forgiveness of the sins of those who shot him.

In 1933 the Revd Son wrote to his brother a precious letter exhorting him to pray: 'I wish you to be a man of prayer. Jesus Christ was really a man of prayer. From his hair to his toe, from the manger to the cross, he was a man of prayer. Even from his resurrection till today he is praying. Christianity is, therefore, a religion of prayer. A Christian is a man of prayer. A Christian life cannot be separated from prayer. The whole of the Christian life is prayer. Christian prayer is not prayer by which human desire is fulfilled. Christian prayer is not prayer coming up from the earth but prayer given from heaven. When Jesus' prayer appeared human prayer disappeared, even that of John the Baptist. Be, therefore, a man of prayer, and be constant in prayer. Do not cease praying. Be diligent in prayer.'[17]

D. The Revd Lee Dae Young (1887–1968)

The Revd Lee Dae Young was a missionary to Sandong in China from 1922 to

1948 and after returning home in 1948 became a minister of Seungdong Presbyterian Church in Seoul. The Revd Lee was first of all recognised as a man of prayer.

When Lee Dae Young was converted at the age of twenty-two he devoted himself to worship, evangelism and prayer. When he was persecuted his faith became stronger and his prayer became full of zeal. When he was a student in the Pyungyang Theological Seminary he was too poor to afford the dormitory fees and accordingly he was told not to dine at the refectory. Mr Lee began to pray underneath the pulpit in the auditorium. For five days he was not seen and was sought for in vain. The president of the Seminary made an announcement requesting prayer for the lost Lee Dae Young and struck the pulpit with his fist. At the strike Mr Lee was awakened from sleep and came out. The president was so moved that he promised to award Mr Lee scholarship aid.

The Revd Lee was known for diligent praying whenever he faced difficulties. During the East Asian War he often suffered from hunger because of the shortage of missionary support. With his family be offered special prayers with tears three times a day. On a certain day there was a large bag of rice in front of his house, on another day there was a special delivery of a cheque from the Mission Board of the North American Presbyterian Church, and on another day there was a large amount of money delivered from the Chinese church. Later the Revd Lee recollected that in those difficult days of mission prayer was everything to him.

It was his life long habit to get up at 3.30 a.m., wash his body with cold water, go to the Church at 4.00 a.m. for prayer, and stay there till nine or ten in the morning. He often prayed through the night, usually with loud voice and great zeal. He often spoke in tongues when he was praying. To the Revd Lee Dae Yong prayer together with Scripture was his major weapon for his ministry. He was an example of prayer to the Korean Church.

IV. THE PRAYER MOUNTAIN MOVEMENT

One of the distinctive features of the prayer movement in Korea is the 'prayer mountain movement' which began in the 1910s and the 1920s and continued to grow in the 1930s when Japanese persecution against the church grew severe. In the beginning a number of individual Christian leaders went to such mountains as Myohyang, Keumkang, Mani, and Samkak to find secluded places for prayer.

The real beginning of the prayer mountain movement, however, can be traced to the founding of a prayer mountain establishment in Chulwon in Kangwon province in August, 1945 and also to the founding of a Yongmoonsan prayer mountain establishment in Kyungbook province by Na Un Mong in October, 1945. We commonly speak of 'the founding of a prayer mountain', and by this we mean the establishment of a kind of house with a sanctuary and dwelling places for visitors, usually centred on and governed by a charismatic individual. In 1947 the First Samkak prayer mountain was founded and in 1950 Samkak Immanuel prayer mountain was founded. After the Korean War in 1950 prayer mountains began to flourish. In the 1960s when student demonstration and military coup d'état intensified social

confusion and insecurity the prayer mountains multiplied rapidly and without precedent.

As pointed out earlier in the case of the prayer habits of the Revd Kil Sun Ju, some characteristic features of the prayer mountain movement have something to do with similar Zen Buddhistic or shamanistic practices and accordingly often fall short of biblical standards of prayer. They tend to be legalistic, superstitious, or too self-consciously devoted to pursuing blessing. The earlier prayer (mountain) movement was also heavily nationalistic, identifying the spiritual cause with patriotism, a link clearly evident throughout the 1919 Independence Movement.

While the prayer mountains long played a positive role in the strengthening of the dedication and prayer life of the Korean church they began to exercise harmful influences upon the Korean church in the 1970s. The prayer mountains often became a nursery of pseudo-religious movements and there arose numerous heretical sects. Most of the prayer mountains were governed by ill-educated persons (mostly by women) and accordingly lacked sound perspectives for Christian faith and living. The directors often played on their own problem-solving and Spirit-endowing charisma and deceived many alienated seekers of satisfaction. On one occasion at a charismatic meeting in a prayer mountain retreat a certain leader even made the gesture of throwing a ball to the congregation to signify that he was endowing them with the Spirit. And the congregation made corresponding gestures of receiving the ball, signifying that they were receiving the Holy Spirit. Immorality, financial fraud and sexual scandals abounded in the prayer mountains. The over-stressed mystical enthusiasm also caused many to depreciate sound Christian teaching and life in the church and resulted in conflict between the mountain goers and the others. The disorderly founding of the numerous prayer houses in the mountains also resulted in damaging and polluting nature and therefore many of the ill-founded prayer houses were ordered removed by the government in the 1970s and 1980s. Whereas the earlier prayer movement was nationalistic and displayed considerable concern for political matters, the later one gradually lost nationalistic overtones owing to the withering of political crisis and the privatisation of religion. More recently nationalistic and political matters have again become one of the major concerns of most prayer meetings whether in local churches or in prayer mountains.

On the other hand, during the 1970s there began a comparatively healthy prayer mountain movement. These prayer mountains were founded and conducted not by individuals but by local churches. Many Churches, including Youngnack, Choonghyun and Full Gospel, are directly operating their own prayer mountains so as to provide suitable places and opportunities for the congregations as well as for ministers to pray regularly. They foster vitality of prayer life in the local churches.

V. CURRENT PRAYER HABITS

The following highlights of the current prayer habits of ministers as well as of their churches based on responses to a questionnaire returned by about 100 ministers, a questionnaire prepared by the present writer and sent out to a sample of 300 ministers.

A. Daybreak prayer

One hundred percent of the ministers engage in daybreak prayers regularly, and about 80% of them offer additional personal prayers for about thirty minutes to one hour after the daybreak prayer meeting at the Church. In most cases the pastor or in certain cases the assistant minister leads the prayer meeting.

About 10% of the congregation regularly attend the daybreak prayer meeting at 4.30 or 5.00 a.m. After a short Bible reading or exposition for about twenty minutes they engage in individual prayers for thirty minutes, either silently or audibly, and occasionally with a loud voice. The close connection between Bible reading and prayer has generated a prayer pattern among the believers such that they could not conceive of praying without first reading the Bible even in personal devotions.

Some of the ministers stress the overarching importance of the daybreak prayer meetings, saying that the success of their ministry depends on daybreak prayer, that the growth of the church depends on the prayers of the congregation.

B. Over-night prayer

Fifty percent of the ministers engage in some kind of over-night prayer once a week. In most of the churches they have Friday over-night prayer meetings. In some churches they hold a prayer meeting from 10.00 p.m. to 4.00 a.m., in other churches from 10.00 p.m. to 2.00 a.m., and in other churches fom 12.00 a.m. to 4.00 a.m. Ten to twenty percent of the congregation participate in the over-night prayer meetings. In most cases the pastor (in very few cases some other leader) leads the prayer meeting.

After listening to a short message or a testimony the participants engage in audible prayers together, focusing on a number of individual as well as congregational prayer items. Occasionally a group from the congregation will visit a prayer mountain to engage in over-night prayers.

The benefit of the over-night prayer meetings was stressed by the ministers. These meetings provide the participants with vitality in their spiritual life, cultivation of the prayer habit, and close spiritual fellowship among the participants. Many testify to answered prayers. The problems of the over-night prayer meetings were also pointed out: they can produce a spiritual arrogance and a sense of complacency relying upon merit. The over-night prayer meetings also cause the participants to become physically tired with the result that many cannot do anything but sleep in the office or the home next day.

C. Fasting

Quite a few ministers and church members occasionally fast. A few ministers have fasted for ten to forty days. Major reasons for fasting were given by the ministers as follows: (a) for the deeper cultivation of one's faith; (b) for solving family problems; (c) for healing; (d) for problems in business; (e) for problems in the church.

The benefits of fasting were listed. Fasting provides an opportunity to offer concentrated prayers. It provides a focus for self-reflection, and thus

encourages participants to have an experience of deepening conviction. It also provides many with an opportunity to overcome the desires of the flesh and to look upon Jesus. The problems of fasting were also frankly acknowledged. It produces a spiritual arrogance and a sense of complacency and even of superiority, much as in the case of over-night prayer. Fasting is often wrongly regarded as an omnipotent means to cure diseases and solve problems.

D. Prayer and ministry

All of the ministers unanimously agree that prayer is indispensable for the success of ministry. When a minister keeps engaging in prayer his congregation relies on and confides in him. Through prayer one is made confident about discerning the will of God. Indispensable to the powerful messsage is prayer. Any message prepared without prayer does little. It is the same with visitation and evangelism. Prayer brings forth a ministry of love. In spite of many hindrances to prayer ministers and believers should do their utmost to pray. Prayer leads one's ministry into victory over satanic power.

VI. LESSONS

First of all we learn that in the church of Korea prayer has been the main source of vitality. The birth and growth of the church came from prayer, and the transformed life of service sprang from prayer. So, too, the power and success of ministry. With humble gratitude we admire men and women of prayer.

We also learn that prayer in the church of Korea was generally forged out of many difficulties of persecution, either under the Japanese enforcement of Shintoism or under the Communist prohibition of Christian faith. In the church of Korea prayer was, therefore, a serious life and death struggle. Prayer was usually a serious means of repenting from sins and returning to and relying upon God alone. In the Korean church prayer has always been accompanied by Scripture reading.

More recently we have sadly come to realise that we the Korean church lack in such earnest and thoroughly dedicated prayer as our forefathers in faith have handed down to us. We are unconsciously and deeply absorbed in secularism and love of material prosperity. Ministers have become too busy with meetings and projects to be thoroughly engaged in prayer. Many of the lay people have begun to think of prayer as a means for acquiring physical and material prosperity and for receiving charismatic gifts rather than as a means of submission to and fellowship with God. Psychological and commercial techniques are taking the place of prayer in ministry and church growth.

It is high time that the Korean church should examine her various lapses and begin earnestly to study the prayer lives of her forefathers in the faith, before she is forced to do so in the difficulties of persecution.

APPENDIX: CAN REVIVALS BE PREPARED FOR BY MAN?

Jonathan Edwards, one of the main figures of the Great Awakening of the

eighteenth century, was convinced that revivals were wrought entirely and immediately by God and man can do little in bringing revivals. Accordingly he experienced 'a very remarkable blessing of heaven' from 1734 to 1736 and 'an abrupt halt of revivals' in 1737.

Charles G. Finney, the 'father of modern revivalism', on the other hand, was convinced and stressed that revivals could be mechanically prepared for by man. Revival, Finney declared, 'is not a miracle; it consists entirely in the right exercise of the powers of nature.. . . The connection between the right use of means for a revival and a revival is as philosophically sure as between the right use of means to raise grain and a crop of wheat'. The laws governing revivals were so clear and simple that anyone following them could obtain the desired results. Finney was not embarrassed to compare the work of the revivalist to that of the Jacksonian politicians trying to gather voters for their party. The minister who wanted a revival would have to use the same means to stir the wills of sinners. Finney even said that 'the results justify my methods'. In accordance with such a conviction Finney stressed that man is free and able to change his own heart. 'The will is free . . . sin and holiness are voluntary acts of mind.' Sin is a voluntary act and holiness is a human possibility. This stance led to a perfectionism and considerable Christian activism.

Norman Vincent Peale, a great inspirationalist who exercised a formative influence on the religious revival of the 1950s, also stressed the human role in revivals. Peale's *Guide to Confident Living* (1948) and *The Power of Positive Thinking* (1952) were sold in the millions and his philosophy of positive thinking became a fad. He stressed a simple 'do-it-yourself' faith, calling for the replacement of 'negative thoughts' with 'positive thinking'. 'You can make your life what you want it to be through belief in God and in yourself', he instructed his readers. You must 'think, believe, visualise success — think big, believe, big, pray big, act big'. When 'you decide that nothing can defeat you, from that instant nothing can defeat you'. In 1974 Peale wrote another book, *You Can If You Think You Can* in which he continued to say 'keep on believing in yourself'. Peale stood for an obvious self-help Pelagianism.

Robert Schuller, a faithful disciple of Peale, utilises his Pelagian techniques and has developed a principle of church growth and popular revivalism based upon his positive or possibility thinking, vision or imagination, and psychological or commercial techniques. Schuller stresses that positive thinking is a pronouncement which causes brain-storming and brings in many creative ideas. Schuller is too optimistic to believe that Jesus ever called any person to struggle against sin and exhorts preachers to preach joyful messages alone if they would be powerful preachers. Schuller also stresses the importance of dreams, of imagination. Imagination creates the future. When you imagine that you are advanced and successful then you will really be advanced and successul. Every success comes from a dream. Schuller even defines faith as nothing but dream. Schuller then recommends the commercial techniques utilised in a prospering shopping centre as desirable church growth principles. The church should be easily accessible, possess enough parking space, provide 'shoppers' with attractive lists of merchandise, hire trained salesmen, advertise in a big way, and invest as much money as possible.

In Korea there have been remarkable revivals and rapid church growth. A number of factors behind the growth could be pointed out. National

sufferings prepared the people's heart with brokenness and yearning. Christianity came as a liberating force after the Japanese colonisation. Shamanism played a role as a receptive soil. The traditional religion of Buddhism was dying. The Korean people are racially and culturally homogeneous, with one language and eager for learning. Therefore the gospel was easily communicated and deeply rooted through earnest Bible studies. The kind of Christianity and the kind of mission policy planted on Korean soil were also significant factors in the church growth. It was an evangelical Christianity centred around Bible studies, prayers and evangelism. The mission was characterised by the so-called Nevius method of self-support, self-government, and self-propagation while yet uncompromising in transforming heathen customs.

Another significant and influential factor for the most recent popular revivals and rapid church growth could be pointed out. It is a kind of Schullerism adopted and popularised by Yonggi Cho of the Full Gospel Central Church. Yonggi Cho claims that he was the initiator of it even before Schullerism was introduced. Anyhow Schullerism or Yonggism has been warmly and widely received by Korean Christians who have faced a unique socio-political crisis during the past twenty years. As a Korean sociologist pointed out, the division of the nation (1945), the Korean War (1950), and the undemocratic and ill-balanced politico-economic structures have caused socio-political instability and dissatisfaction among the Korean people. They have lost a sense of value judgment and face identity crises as individuals as well as a community. Even the established churches were not able to solve this crisis. Yonggism promises both stability and satisfaction.

Yonggism has provided a sense of religious self-identity and self-accomplishment. It has infused the heart of the congregation with a new conviction that to become a new creature, forgiven and justified, can be attested by such religious experiences as healing and tongues-speaking. It has also provided the congregation with a sense of self-confidence and self-accomplishment through infusing them with positive thinking and imagination. Yonggi Cho continues to exhort his congregation to be positive and imaginative. There is a large motto placed inside the church building which reads, 'If you can! All things are possible to him who believes'. The main contents of Yonggi Cho's message of positive thinking run as follows: Be positive and creative. Take away any feeling of negative or impossible thinking. Have a dream. Think of what does not exist as if it does exist. Have a dream in which your husband is converted. Have a dream in which your sickness is healed. Have a dream in which your business is prosperous. If you dream, see, and possess it in the fourth dimension it will be realised in the third dimension. This is because the fourth dimension embraces and overrules the third dimension. The languages of the fourth dimension are dream, vision, and imagination. Such a message has been directed to stress and promise physical and material blessing together with the spiritual (the so-called three beat blessing). The congregation becomes confident and even experiences such blessings.

Yonggism has also provided to the alienated a sense of belonging to a comfortable community. The Full Gospel Central Church provides a warm and lively atmosphere. The congregation is excited by charismatic messages and is encouraged to respond with 'Amen' or 'Hallelujah'. They exchange

warm greetings of mutual love during the services and reaffirm a deep sense of belonging together to a unique and proud community. The sense of belongingness is intensified through fellowship in the home cell units. The Central Church is divided into over ten thousand home cell units and every member is required to attend the weekly unit meeting. Each layman is assigned to carry out the task of evangelism, propagating the full gospel message of positive thinking. Voluntarism together with positive thinking have caused a great mobilisation of the laity and the creation of a tightly knit mammoth community.

Yonggi Cho once admitted that the rapid growth at the Full Gospel Central Church was not a miracle but the result of applying the rule of church growth and the rule of the Holy Spirit. There are a number of rapidly growing churches in Seoul which are following and applying the so called rule of the Holy Spirit, *i.e.* the method and technique of Schullerism, of Yonggism. Easily noticeable are similar emphases in these churches. They include emotional messages which stress the conversion experience, the message of positive thinking and imagination which stresses blessing and victory, feastlike warm atmosphere at the worship service with gospel-singing and mutual greetings, tightly knit organisation of the home cell units and the systematic training of lay people.

We evangelicals who love Jesus and want his gospel of salvation to be proclaimed to the heart of the lost are facing critical problems. How far dare we utilise human effort and methods to proclaim the gospel more effectively to bring revivals and church growth? While we admit that Schullerism or Yonggism has brought popular and rapid church growth we cannot but point out that there are serious problems involved.

They include the following. Conversion is generally understood in terms of human experience rather than a divine gift of grace. Faith is generally understood as a human conviction based upon emotional or volitional movement rather than as a total reliance upon God based upon a total self-denial. The emphasis upon positive thinking and imagination tends to neglect or deny one of the basics of biblical teaching, that God's grace and salvation are given when human possibilites are broken and impoverished to the point of weakness and nothingness. Schullerism or Yonggism does not take note of such confessions as Paul's 'I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses . . . for when I am weak, then I am strong' (2 Cor. 12:9,10). Schullerism or Yonggism tends to stress human success and happiness and neglects the positive value of trials and suffering. It tends to stress complacency and joy instead of sin and repentance. It tends to stress self-confidence instead of humility. It also encourages rapid ministerial success based upon positive thinking and the fourth dimensional dreams instead of ministerial fruits based upon tears and labours. In short it tends to infuse vanity into the heart of ministers and discourages seeking greater labours and hardship. The stress upon physical and material blessings in this world tends to confuse Christian value judgments. It even tends to justify a kind of Eusebian concept of the kingdom of God, an updated attempt on the effort to identify the kingdom of God with the Christianised Roman Empire.

It is high time that we evangelicals become humbly and biblically self-critical in regard to the various methods we are applying to our work of evangelism and church growth. We should be guided by the teachings of the

Holy Scriptures and the Holy Spirit alone and follow the footsteps of our forefathers in evangelism who determined to 'devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word' (Acts 6:4 AV).

Addendum

Revd Yonggi Cho recently told me (July 22, 1989) that he has abandoned Arminianism and adopted Calvinism. He confessed that he has come to believe wholeheartedly in the sovereignty of God and said that 'only those whom God wills are saved, only those whom good wills are healed'. I expressed my strong hope that Revd Cho will practice what he confessed and would become a balanced biblical and evangelical preacher.

14

Lessons from the Prayer Habits of the Church in China

DAVID WANG

The phenomenal growth of the church in China is nothing short of a sovereign move of God. How else can one explain the fact that China, which turned Communist in 1949, now has perhaps the highest number of Christians in any one country? By conservative estimates, there are about fifty million Christians in China today. These are not Christians by birth or by tradition, for there is no Christian tradition in China as in Europe or America. These are people who have made a personal decision to follow Christ, and they are fully aware of the price they may have to pay.

During the past thirty-odd years, the Chinese church has gone through an experience of persecution and dispersion similar to that of the early Christian church. By 1951 all foreign missionaries had left China. In the 1950s and 1960s, Chinese pastors, evangelists, and lay leaders were imprisoned and sent to labour camps. Churches were closed down.

During the Cultural Revolution of 1966–1976, even ordinary believers were persecuted throughout the country. Bibles were searched out and burned. All visible traces of Christianity, as well as of other faiths, were completely eradicated.

Nevertheless, the church in China did not die. Like seed, it was buried in the ground, only to rise again — this time with a bumper harvest! Church buildings were confiscated, but the '*ekklesia*' — those called out by God — continued to meet secretly in homes. These were the house churches. With Bibles and pastors gone, Christians still gathered to sing, pray and testify to answered prayers.

Amidst political chaos and wide-spread purges, peace and joy in the lives of Christians witnessed to the power of God. The Lord himself confirmed his reality with frequent healings, signs and wonders. By 1978 house churches were mushrooming throughout China and they were filled to overflowing.

The most rapid growth occurred between the years of 1979 and 1982. During this period China launched her open door policy and the Four Modernisations Campaign. There was a general relaxation of restrictions on religious beliefs. By 1983 house churches were estimated to number over 150,000.

Since 1979 the Chinese government has reopened or approved 4,000 churches and meeting points, mainly in urban areas. These churches are under the supervision of the semi-official Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM).

By 1983 many of God's servants were released from prison. Many others did not survive prison and labour camp. But those who did survive preached the gospel with doubled enthusiasm, both in house churches and TSPM churches. They feared nothing, for what more did they have to lose? Their bold witness gave increased impetus to the growth of the church.

The vast majority of China's Christians still worship in house churches. It is in this stream of church movement that evangelisation is most active. Divine healing and miracles are common. House churches have come under increasing pressure to join the TSPM, and are often threatened with closure if they refuse. Most are reluctant to join for they see the TSPM as the government's tool to control Christianity in China.

But whether believers worship in open churches or house churches, almost every person who has made contact with China's Christians is impressed with their sincerity, enthusiasm and simplicity of faith. These traits are seen most clearly in their prayer lives. The following observations on the prayer patterns of China's believers are derived through personal contacts, correspondence from China, and interviews with itinerant evangelists and pastors of China's house church movement. I have also consulted with co-workers of several China ministry agencies and those of Asian Outreach. One of our associates has made over two hundred trips into China and has met and enjoyed fellowship with Christians in almost all of China's provinces.

Nevertheless, since the Christian population of China is around fifty million and still growing, my observation of China's church is but a glimpse of the total picture. This glimpse does reveal, however, that there are certain clear patterns in the prayer lives in China's believers, particularly those who worship in the house churches. These are not set forth as models to imitate, but as observations from which we can learn. The church in China is not a perfect church, but seeing it at close hand can be both humbling and inspiring.

I. THEY PRAY AT GREAT LENGTH

A pastor from Hong Kong took several Christian youths to visit China. They enjoyed fellowship with a rural house church for four days. The services were lengthy, continuing from early morning till late evening. But what the Hong Kong pastor remembered most vividly was the time they spent in prayer. He later wrote that the participants felt the forceful leading of the Holy Spirit as the prayers continued at great length. On a couple of days, the prayers lasted three to four hours.

An associate of ours was invited to attend a baptismal service in a village in Henan province where the Holy Spirit is bringing about a phenomenal revival. People began to gather at around 5 p.m. to prepare for the baptism at 7 p.m. There was singing, testifying and united prayer. The formal meetings started punctually at 7 p.m. but as several leaders began to lead in prayer, it became a chain prayer session. One after another, the believers stood up and prayed. The baptisms did not begin until 11.30 p.m. and went on to almost 2 a.m. the next morning. Altogether there were over five hours of prayer in that one service!

'The lengthiness of our prayers is a consequence of our persecution', an itinerant evangelist/pastor in China explained to me. 'For so many years we had no pastors or Bibles or even songbooks. Therefore when we gathered

together we could only pray. It became the major focus of our meetings. In fact it was only God's omnipotence and the believers' prayers that sustained our church.' This pastor also verified my observation of the frequent fasting of China's believers. He said, 'Fasting is very closely associated with prayer life'. Most of the believers I know fast regularly and for fairly lengthy periods. Even in private prayers the Chinese Christians pray at length. My family was astonished when we joined our relatives in Shanghai for dinner during one of our visits. Our niece, no more than ten years old, was asked to say grace. She stood up at the table and prayed for at least ten minutes! The local guests did not seem at all surprised.

China's believers are accustomed to sustained intercession. A Western Christian leader reported the testimony of a Chinese believer who prayed unceasingly for 18 months for the healing of a friend. And a veteran itinerant pastor in China told me of believers who prayed for years for the conversion of their local Party secretary until he was finally born again.

II. THEY PRAY WITH INTENSITY

'They are storming the gates of hell and shaking the Throne of Grace,' said a co-worker, describing her impression of the prayers of believers in China. 'Even when they pray in dialects that I don't understand, I can sense the earnestness of their prayers. I hear it in the urgent, pleading tone of their voices.' She said she has yet to hear a prayer in China that sounds bland or insipid.

Several years ago, elderly Pastor Wang Mingdao, a saint of the church in China, explained to me, 'We have nothing — no pastors, no churches, no Bibles . . . nothing! We only have God. Therefore we go to him in desperation.'

I could detect this intense desperation when I listened recently to a tape of a prayer meeting at a new house church in Xinjiang Province. But earnestness is evident not only in the tone and volume of the believers' prayers. An ex-China missionary told me recently of a period of silence lasting 10 to 15 minutes in a prayer meeting he visited: 'There was absolute silence as we sensed the Holy Spirit hovering over us. His presence was so real that everyone was awe-struck. We just knelt there and no-one moved. And it was so intense that we were all perspiring!'

I could identify with this missionary's awe. I remember when I first returned to China in 1972 in the midst of the catastrophic Cultural Revolution. I met a group of 'underground' believers. We gathered in a small, dimly-lit room, and in order not to attract the attention of neighbours, we did not sing. We didn't even say very much. We sat in a small circle and very naturally entered into the realm of prayer. Except for an occasional sob, no one uttered a sound. But the intensity of that prayer meeting cut most deeply into my being. We had talked with God.

III. THEY PRAY WITH ONE ACCORD

The Chinese Christians love the opportunity to pray together. First of all, they value the presence of other Christians. Christians may number fifty

million in China, but they are still a minority among one billion Chinese. They live in an atheistic, unsympathetic environment. Hence the presence and fellowship of other believers are very precious and encouraging. When Christians get together, the most natural thing is to pray.

Secondly, the Chinese Christians place great value on group prayer. They take Jesus at his word: '. . . if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven' (Mt. 18:19). So they are eager to pray together and with concerted voices. They listen attentively to the one who prays aloud and echo 'Amen' emphatically.

The other day I saw a video of several hundred believers standing in the courtyard of a house church. For about twenty minutes they bowed their heads and echoed 'Amen' to the prayers of the leaders speaking inside the house. They could not see those leaders, and probably could barely hear them, but they were actively participating. The Hong Kong pastor who took the video commented that he noticed China's believers were far more unified in prayer than the Christians in Hong Kong or in the West. Several of our China co-workers also noticed this. '*Kou ying xin he*', or 'echoing with the mouth and agreeing with the heart', is much more enthusiastically demonstrated amongst the believers of China than of the West.

China's Christians are also more accustomed to verbalising their prayers. One elderly Bible woman told us, 'Even in private devotion, we "confess with our mouths". And for that I was severely punished in my labour camp. My cell mates would report to the guards that I was still worshipping God and propagating superstition. The officials would beat me and punish me. But I just kept on. Maybe my voice was a little softer, but I was always verbalising my prayers. For me, to hear my own prayers would strengthen my faith in Jesus. And later when several of the cell-mates became Christians, they followed my custom. They prayed fervently and loudly just as they had heard me pray for many years.'

No matter what we may think of the way Chinese believers echo 'Amen!' to every utterance, we all admit this habit reinforces their faith. It is also an encouragement to the one leading in prayer. The evaluation of a Chinese itinerant evangelist is positive: 'Many of our leaders are themselves new Christians. They need the encouragement of sensing that the congregation is with them. It brings unity.' Another itinerant pastor told me that the unity of the Christians in China is most evident when they pray together. He said, 'Recently we had a secret retreat. Pastors from five different provinces came together. Many of us had never met before. But when we started to pray, our hearts were united as we prayed with one accord.'

IV. THEY PRAY WITH THE LANGUAGE OF SCRIPTURE

Seven years ago I went with two co-workers to establish contact with a Christian sister in Shanghai. Due to a communications breakdown, no one was at home when we went to her apartment. Since China was still closed at that time, we did not want to attract suspicious attention by leaving and coming back through the neighbourhood a second time. So the three of us sat on the door-step of Sister Yang's third-floor apartment and waited. It was hours later when she came home from work and let us in. Other families who

shared the apartment would be coming home in about a half-hour. After that there would be no privacy.

The sister then suggested that we should pray for one another. I was the only brother in the group, so following Chinese culture, I was asked to begin. I prayed longer than I usually do and used a heavy dose of pious vocabulary. I thought I was following the pattern of China's church. And then it was Sister Yang's turn. In a most natural and free-flowing manner, she began to pray in the language of Scripture. Quoting passages from Romans to Genesis to Philippians to the Psalms, Sister Yang used Scripture throughout her entire prayer of ten to fifteen minutes. She claimed God's promises using Scripture; she responded positively to God's call — again using Scripture. By the time Sister Yang had finished, we were awed! There was absolutely no pretentiousness on her part. It was all very natural and sincere.

Later as we shared this incident with others who have prayed with China's believers, we discovered that Sister Yang was not exceptional. A former China missionary said, 'Even before I was forced out of China, I noticed that Chinese Christians prayed eloquently. And now when I return I hear not just the same eloquence, but often long passages of Scripture being prayed aloud by the believers.'

She attributed this to the fact that for 30 years Bibles have been in extremely short supply. For many of China's believers, the Word of God consists of what they have memorised from a borrowed Bible, or a Scripture portion copied by hand. Scripture memorisation comes naturally to them, partly due to practice and necessity, but also due to a love of the Word. 'Often they pray through their entire theology,' a scholar of a leading Chinese Christian research centre commented. 'They pray in Scripture language, not only as a reinforcement of what they have memorised, but also as a verbalisation of their theology — the way some of us recite the Apostle's Creed. But their repetition of Scriptures is personal and relevant to their current situation. We outsiders sometimes think that the person leading in prayer is trying to sermonise. This may not be the case, for often believers pray through their theology in their private prayers as well.'

Praying in Scripture language is actually being taught in a mushrooming house church movement in Henan province. I read in its handcopied 'Pastoral Care Manual' that using Scriptures in prayer is one certain way of praying according to the will of God. Our co-workers who have close contact with China's believers all feel we should learn this lesson — that praying in the language of God's Word brings God-glorifying results.

V. THEY PRAY ON ALL OCCASIONS

'And pray in the Spirit on all occasions, with all kinds of prayers and requests' (Eph. 6:18). This verse is most aptly demonstrated in the prayer patterns of the church in China. China's house churches, in particular, are conservative, very evangelistic, and have a large segment of practising Pentecostals. It could be said that in many respects, the majority of China's house church Christians are 'charismatic', even though they are often not familiar themselves with this term.

But whether they pray in tongues or only with understanding, the

Christians in China are known for their sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. They have gone through twenty-odd years of suffering and persecution when they lived as though treading on thin ice. During these times they developed a high sensitivity to the Spirit. They needed this to survive. They trusted in the promise of Isaiah 30:20–21: 'Although the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, your teachers will be hidden no more . . . Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it." '

China's present political climate is not as austere as in the past, but it is still subject to capricious changes. Something considered good today may be bad tomorrow. Christians have learned to depend not on human understanding but on the Holy Spirit's leading.

Since the daily living of China's Christians is Spirit-directed, it is natural that the Holy Spirit is predominant in their prayers. One Western China scholar made this observation, and a widely-travelled itinerant evangelist agrees: 'Outside of China the Church emphasises organisation. Inside China, the Church emphasises direction — the direction of the Holy Spirit. Thus the believers pray much in the Spirit.'

The second most common observation by the people I interviewed is this: 'They pray on all occasions.' In frequency it followed the observation that China's believers pray long prayers. 'Praying is their frame of mind', an ex-China missionary said. And I tend to agree with her. In 1977 I took a Westerner to visit the leader of a vibrant house church in Shanghai quite late in the evening. Quite a few people were sleeping outdoors because of the summer heat and our arrival attracted far too much attention. By the time we got to the leader's little house, a sizeable crowd was following us. It was most unwise to linger on our visit. We greeted the leader, paid our respects, and prepared to leave. But without a word she motioned us into the hallway and closed the door. Then she began to pray. It was perfectly natural to her that this occasion called for prayer.

Later the Western Christian wrote in his report: 'With my limited exposure to the house church Christians in China, I have noticed that they pray on all occasions.' I believe this is so because in the lives of Chinese believers, so many occasions arise which necessitate prayer. Living under the Communist system, people constantly encounter obstacles and practical difficulties. Goods and services which we take for granted are often hard to come by because of the bureaucratic maze, apathy of service personnel, lack of efficiency, and simple lack of supplies. A rampant 'back door' system which is facilitated by gifts or personal 'connections' forces the most ethical and conservative Christians of China to turn to God on every occasion. They must acknowledge and rely on him in all things.

One of my co-workers who has regular contact with the Christians in rural China explains: 'In most parts of rural China, poverty, disasters — both natural and man-made — and the lack of all kinds of resources, drive the Christians to total dependence on God. He is not their last resort. He is the first and only resort.' And they go to him first '. . . with all kinds of prayers and requests' for all kinds of things, including animals. In rural China it is very common to pray for the healing of a pig or for the retrieval of lost animals. Livestock are important to their livelihood. God answers these prayers almost without fail, sometimes instantaneously.

For example, we received this interesting testimony in 1982: A family in

rural Henan had seven goats. One day two goats were missing. The family searched hills and valleys and could not find them. They brought the matter to the prayer meeting that night. Christians prayed over it. When the meeting was over and they opened the door to leave, they found the two missing goats right outside the door.

In living out Ephesians 6:18, China's Christians view prayer as an all-powerful means because it reaches the all-powerful God. From experience they know that they can survive without Bibles, churches, pastors and many other things as long as they have a 'hotline to heaven'. And this they have fully used to move mountains. Answered prayer is probably the most common cause of new conversions in China.

VI. THEY PRAY WITH EMPATHY

My associate who has enjoyed fellowship with thousands of Chinese Christians during his 200-plus visits explained to me why the believers always cry during their prayers. It is not just a sign of their earnestness and desperation, or that the Chinese are more emotional; it demonstrates empathy.

First, they identify with those who are suffering (Heb. 13:3). 'Even as late as 1984 after the nation's new policy of a religious freedom became a norm', my associate said, 'I have attended all-night prayer meetings in which hundreds of believers prayed and cried tears of sympathy, identifying with those pastors and leaders who were still imprisoned. They were also keenly aware of the difficulties of those who were released from prison — many of them frail and without any kind of income.'

Secondly, they readily identify with the backsliders of the church. They will cry and pray for certain individuals who have drifted away from the Lord. But also they pray tears of repentance on behalf of the church as a whole. For instance, on more than one occasion I have witnessed China's Christians crying for the prevailing apathy of the church in Hong Kong. 'Oh Lord, we are piercing your heart and nailing you to the cross again', is a common lament. Perhaps because of their close communion with God, they tend to identify more sensitively with the grief and suffering of Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:10).

Third, they identify with those who are lost without Christ. I have listened to a tape of a spontaneous prayer meeting when about fifteen pastors met in Canton last February. They came from several different provinces. One by one they wept and interceded for the salvation of people in each province of China as well as for the world. One cannot but be moved by their earnestness in interceding for the lost. 'Have mercy on us, Lord God, have mercy on us!' they cried out to God for hours. And they repented that they had not done enough to reach the world, even though almost to a man they had been imprisoned for their faith and zeal. This type of prayer is common among ordinary believers as well, and even among new babes in Christ.

VII. THEY PRAY WITH THANKSGIVING

Visitors, particularly those from the West, sometimes notice that China's

believers are not very celebrative in their worship and prayers. Usually their meetings are quite solemn. This is a valid observation. In fact, some churches warn their people that they should not laugh too loudly, 'in order to protect the image of the church'. This seriousness is reflected in their sobbing, crying and wailing during prayers. But nevertheless they are thankful to God! Even in what we would consider a very distressed or even poverty-stricken state, the Christians in China give thanks.

One of our co-workers was taken to a house church prayer meeting in Swatow. The room was small, dimly lit and packed with people. There were a few rickety benches for people to sit on. Others were sitting on the bed which was just a board laid across two benches. Children and young people were even crouching underneath the bed! The room was stuffy because there was only one tiny window. To our co-worker, the place was anything but pleasant, and the believers there had few earthly possessions. But when they prayed, sounds of 'Thank you, Father!' filled the room. They prayed as though they were in heaven, totally oblivious of their surroundings. This thankful attitude is carried over into other aspects of life. It is quite obvious that as a whole, the Christians in China have '. . . learned to be content whatever the circumstances' (Phil. 4:11).

In a recent retreat a co-worker of Asian Outreach gave thanks to God for allowing him to get acquainted with the Christians of China. He said, 'Our ministry to China is definitely not just one way, from us to them. In my fellowship with China's Christians, I have learned a great deal from their simplicity of faith, their spiritual depth and their spirit of contentment.' I believe this inner strength and beauty must have a bearing on the prayer patterns of the believers in China.

Dr James Hudson Taylor III, a great-grandson of Hudson Taylor and currently General Director of Overseas Missionary Fellowship, likens China's Christians to the believers in the book of Acts. They were known as 'those who call on the name of the Lord'. They were a people of prayer. And Dr Taylor asks, 'I wonder if we (the Christians of the free world) would be described as such? Or have we lost something of that life of prayer?'

Perhaps we should humble ourselves, and like a disciple of old, come to Jesus and ask, 'Lord, teach us to pray!' (Luke 11:1).

15

Lessons from the Prayer Habits of the Church in Latin America

PABLO E. PÉREZ

Prayer is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Evangelical church in Latin America. It is highly emotional and intense, as well as rather reserved and personal, and is always concerned with the practical and the concrete. The average believer is more interested in the actual practice of prayer than in the theological intricacies it may involve.

Obviously, there are a number of lessons to be learned from the prayer habits of believers in Latin America. Yet in order to profit from them adequately, one must at least have a general overview of the factors that have contributed to make these habits what they are, as well as their characteristics at the present time.

I. BACKGROUND

A. Pre-Columbian Times

Communication to and from the supernatural is one of the basic human activities.[1] In many societies it is accompanied by a variety of manipulative practices because the object of that communication is either an impersonal force or an undefined personal being who may be nothing more than the product of a fertile imagination. Somehow these features have a tendency to remain in the minds and hearts of people across long periods of time, and become an integral part of their culture. And Latin America is no exception to this phenomenon, showing traces of its great Indian civilisations that flourished before the arrival of Columbus. These religious impulses were expressed in prayers that were offered to their different deities, such as the one spoken by a midwife in ancient Mexico who offered a new born baby to the deity of water, saying:

> There it is already in your hands, wash it and cleanse it as you know it is fitting . . . purify it from the uncleanliness it has taken from its parents, and may the blemishes and uncleanliness be taken away by water, and may it destroy them and cleanse every impurity it may have. May it please you, our lady, that its heart and its life be purified and cleansed . . . it remains in your hands, since it is only you who derserve and are worthy of the gift you have, to cleanse even from before the beginning of the world.[2]

A similar set of ideas is found in the following prayer by an Inca Indian:

> Viracocha, Lord of the universe!
> Whether you are male or female
> who rules both heat and generation,
> you who are able
> to make magic simply through your saliva,
> where are you?
> You will not hide from your son.
> You may be above,
> you may be below,
> or in the firmament,
> where your counsel is located,
> hear me![3]

Some traces of these prayers are present today at different levels and with different shades of intensity, even if some Evangelicals in Latin America may not be fully aware of their influence.

B. Iberian Conquest

Much could be said about the faith and religious practice of the Iberian conquerors of the sixteenth century. These proud people brought a special type of religious practice which combined an already syncretistic expression of Roman Catholicism with patterns of thought and conduct shaped by centuries of the Arab culture introduced into the Iberian peninsula by the Moors. The result was a people who inevitably 'thought with a Semitic and African criterion'.[4] This 'Iberian soul'[5] (*anima naturaliter iberica*) left its indelible imprint on the whole newly discovered continent, mixing easily with the existing cultures, adopting and adapting many of their features, particularly their religious activities.

Under these circumstances prayer became an effort to communicate with a personal God through many intermediaries, but primarily through Mary in one of her various localised manifestations.[6] In some cases, the strong animistic background has provided a fertile ground for the development of Spiritism and as a result, 'many Catholics in these countries spend their life offering fetishist worship to their saints from whom they request the gift of a good harvest and a payoff in the lottery'.[7] In some others, people develop a systematic and disciplined habit of prayer at more or less specific times and places — though rather mechanical and ritualistic.[8]

C. The Coming of Protestantism

The first Protestant missionaries introduced practices quite different from the existing ones. On the one hand, and because of the heritage from the Reformation, religion for them was much more decisively shaped by the Bible; on the other, it represented a type of syncretism with a strong influence of Anglo-Saxon culture and a dislike of 'pagan' or 'uncivilised' practices.

Prayer was viewed as an evangelical privilege, addressed to God, and only in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was primarily the spontaneous expression of the soul that was thirsty for the living God who, in turn, delighted into entering into fellowship with his children. In those early years

— the decades of the 1860s and 1870s in most countries — prayer was a rather formal exercise, with but little emotional expression, though always careful to avoid any resemblance to the merely ritualistic. As such, it soon became a very satisfying aspect of the newly established faith, even if it eventually also became a stereotyped activity.

All of these factors had a definite influence on the prayer habits of Evangelicals in Latin America. Not all of those that seemed to be negative have produced negative results; some have become assets that are now contributing to a vital prayer life in many churches, and indeed in the church as a whole, as we shall now see.

II. CHARACTERISTICS

With this cultural background, religious life in Latin America is both intensely individualistic and gregarious. At times it is but little different from the religion bound up with the phrase 'the faith of the charcoal vendor',[9] and at others it is an uplifting, inspirational activity where the Holy Spirit is evidently in control. At the risk of oversimplification, it could be said that the life of prayer can be classified either as personal or collective.

A. Personal Aspects

As with many of their predecessors, personal piety for many Latin Americans tends to reflect the traditional Spanish mysticism.[10] Prayers are the expression of a deep conviction of sin, of great spiritual needs, of a desire for intimate communion with God as the almighty Creator, or the revered Lord of the Church. These prayers are in the form of exquisite poems which become public through church bulletins or other means of local communication. They are thus a continuation of the spirit of the Spanish mystics who were 'great individual and solitary souls, each of whom feels that he "carries a king within", whom he has forced to descend to his heart'.[11] This quality of expression of course, is the exception rather than the rule.

The great majority of individual believers tend to be reticent to make a public show of their prayer habits. But judging from their public prayers and their deportment in church services, their prayers are a vital part of their Christian life. Gone are the mediators of a holy pantheon, as well as some of the other external helps which were previously necessary for their requests to be heard; present is still a sense of dependence on some kind of mediator who supposedly has a more reliable access to God. This can be either the pastor or one of the more dedicated members of the congregation. And while this attitude reflects, to many, a rather unnecessary residue in any prayer life that is truly biblical, it certainly represents a vestige of deeply ingrained practices. Yet it is also a step in a useful direction, since it can be used to point to the clear and direct access to God that is the privilege of every believer. It is a healthy sign of maturity when a senior saint whose life is characterised by fruitful prayer, is approached by someone younger in the Lord to request special prayer, and then to have that same senior believer help the younger Christian to discover for himself the privilege of answered prayer.

These individual prayers are primarily requests for the most immediate needs and everyday concerns. If the actual time devoted to prayer is rather

short, one can at least say that vitality here is measured more by the spontaneous expressions of thoughts and desires as well as the knowledge of being in the immediate presence of God, than by any other standard.

Though not strictly a personal matter, prayer in the intimacy of the home should be considered at this point. Prayer before meals is one of the distinctive features of Evangelicals, whether at home or in public. It has an added evangelistic appeal to non-believers, people who almost invariably show great respect and reverence for it, at times even requesting it from an Evangelical who might be present. Family prayers — known as 'the daily family altar' — are constantly encouraged at different levels by providing a number of very good devotional booklets and guidelines for the faithful. Many believers avail themselves of these various aids offered to them. In some cases, particularly in large cities, it is increasingly difficult to schedule a time when the whole family can gather for this purpose.

In short, one must be careful not to make many generalisations concerning private prayer, nor attempt to draw many lessons from it. There is a great deal of truth in the notion that public prayer is a true reflection of what takes place in the intimacy of one's communion with the Lord.

B. Collective Aspects

There are such substantial differences in quality and length of prayer between Christians in the rural areas, especially among the different Indian tribes, and those in urban and suburban enclaves, that generalisations ignoring these differences are apt to be misleading.

In rural areas and villages, where contact with nature and the spirit world seems to make the need for God's intervention more urgent, and where animistic superstitions prevail, public prayer plays a very important part of the daily activities of most believers. The leaders of the believing community take their role very seriously and they hold meetings every night at which all believers are expected to be present — regardless of whether it is young people's night, women's night or prayer meeting. In addition to this, these leaders hold frequent early morning prayer meetings when only they are expected to attend. In these cases an individual may pray as long as one hour — most likely in his own native language — only to be followed by another who prays just as long, or even longer. Yet, these are very intense, eloquent expressions of grateful and concerned hearts. Usually they beseech of the Lord his direct intervention in minute details of the daily routine of rural life.

But prayer for the sick is also very important. Bruce Olson, a missionary chronicler, bears witness to the simple, yet absolutely trusting faith of people like the Motilones, of Colombia. He says that these people expect the Lord to perform miracles every time they take medicine. 'Whenever,' he states, 'they were given a shot, or took pills or had ointment applied, songs were sung asking Jesus to cure them. . . Their prayers were a part of the treatment and, consequently, of the healing process.'[12] Once when a man was bitten by a poisonous snake, Olson visited his home a week later and found him almost totally healed. He pointed out that he thought the anti-snake serum had run out, so he asked what they had done to have the man cured. The answer was: 'Well, all we had was an antibiotic. We applied it to him and we prayed to God to heal him. As you can see, he did.'[13]

Similar focus on prayer, but over a quite different issue, emerges from another account. Hugh Steven narrates the experiences of the Chamulas of Southern Mexico, as they face bitter opposition and harsh persecution because of their belief in the 'new ways'. Prayer in this case is not only in the heat of the moment, when killers ambush a believer's home and there is little hope of escape (these killers fled in fear a little later on), but in intercession for those young Christians who are tempted to return to their former ways, that they may be strengthened. These prayers are offered in small group retreats or in large gatherings for fleeing believers.[14] No less important — though not fully documented yet — has been the experience of spectacular deliverances of many church leaders and ordinary believers from the hands, attacks, and threats of guerilla fighters or the armed forces of some countries. The story is yet to be told about many such cases in places like Guatemala and Peru, to name just two, even if not every life has been spared. Vivid descriptions by eyewitnesses testify to the power of prayer and its miraculous results.

Whether in the rural areas or in city churches, prayer is an integral part of church services. It can be a highly controlled liturgical exercise, or an extemporaneous and spontaneous outburst of the collective desire to enter into true communion with the Lord. Interestingly enough, even though the majority of churches shun written prayers, there are certain phrases and circumstances that exhibit a high degree of ritualism — as in any other part of the world. In quite a few places the pastoral prayer is one of the central parts of these services and an expression of the life of the church community. These prayers are in some cases elaborate pieces of liturgical oratory, while in others they appear to be tedious because they consist of endless thanksgiving for enumerated birthdays, solutions to problems of different sorts, healings, and the like; as well as earnest requests for divine initiative in a long list of much the same problems and circumstances.

As a part of the worship service, public prayers also 'dramatise the life of the Church during the week just ended and its immediate future once the pastoral benediction is pronounced'.[15] And since the worship service 'is an event that brings to light the innermost concerns of a congregation . . . prayers, the sermon and the announcements serve as a measuring stick to determine the ethico-theological context of a congregation'.[16] They also point to the degree of involvement a particular church may have with the community around it, 'whether it sees itself as a servant or a prima donna, whether it conceives of its worship service as an alienating refuge or as a liberating celebration'.[17]

But regularly scheduled prayer meetings still show signs of trouble. In most countries, *e.g.* in Mexico, 'the most disappointing meeting in the Church is often the Prayer Meeting, not so much on account of the poor attendance as for the poverty of the devotional spirit, the absence of the sense of worship, and of any adequate conception of prayer'.[18] New life, however, seems to have been instilled into some of the newer groups and denominations on account, partly, of the coming of renewal through the charismatic movement and some other influences. Yet the weaknesses pointed out by Báez-Camargo have not been completely overcome. It seems that outward fervour has replaced the coldness perceived by many, yet even this has not ensured that the primary purpose of the meeting be for *prayer.*

A number of other church-related prayer activities have been the mainstay of many groups for decades. Ladies meeting regularly in small groups have traditionally provided very valuable support to pastors and leaders for programmes at the local, district or national levels. Many evangelistic ventures, particularly at the local level, have been faithfully sustained by these efforts.

Prayer vigils and fasts — whether all night, part of the night, part of a day, a whole day, or several days — are held quite frequently in many churches. They may be regular features — once a month, for instance — or called for specific, pressing needs, but they are always very satisfying to those who attend. Participants speak in glowing terms of the many blessings received or derived from such meetings. There is no question in many hearts and minds that the 'sacrifice' made by staying up a whole night is well worth the effort; the church always reaps great benefits from it.

It is during these concentrated efforts that many experience first hand the meaning of prevailing prayer and perceive it to be part of a believer's warfare. Time and again one hears from those engaged in prolonged seasons of prayer that they are worn out or exhausted as a result of these activities. However, most of them have no question in their minds that they have experienced victory in the Lord over specific requests and needs.[19]

C. The Pentecostal Phenomenon

Without a doubt, Pentecostalism (or more broadly, the charismatic movement) is the most important force in the Latin American church scene. It exhibits many of the features common to Pentecostals the world over, yet it has developed firmly and grown profusely throughout the continent. Peculiar styles of prayer stand out as dynamic expressions of these believers' faith. Their public praying has several dimensions which deserve close attention.

> First, it is a common practice which becomes contagious. As such, when it comes time for talking to God, everybody in the room talks to Him and the noise rises to a loud roar. The exuberant worshippers do not feel particularly inhibited about their own voice levels either, and some actually shout while they are praying.[20]

This is such a contagious exercise that

> many who would never dare to pray when everyone else was listening lose their timidity and gladly pray when everyone else is doing the same. Mistakes in grammar or lack of ecclesiastical polish are not even noticed by the person in the next seat. To God, they are not important at all.[21]

This, obviously, takes place in the public worship services, but in the intimacy of the home a person expresses himself or herself freely and does not necessarily pray out loud. In some cases he or she may even seem taciturn and somewhat mystical outwardly, although there is no lack of earnestness or intensity inwardly.

Second, speaking in tongues occurs almost exclusively during prayer times. To be sure, this particular aspect is not uniquely Latin American. Yet it is practised in typically local fashion and provides a great deal of personal

satisfaction to many, contributing to their growth in the Christian life. Outsiders may question the practical value of this activity, and fellow believers may shun it, but to Pentecostals it is a very rewarding and joyful part of their relationship with the Lord, as well as an unmistakeable evidence of the baptism of (or with) the Holy Spirit. This in itself is enough to compensate them, in their view, for any shadow of ill repute. As a matter of fact, it gives grounds to not a few for feeling really proud, proud enough to look on other believers as second-class Christians.[22]

> Third, prayer for healing is of primary importance. Wagner states: Studies have shown that faith healing is a more universal characteristic of Latin American Pentecostals than other charismatic gifts, for example, speaking in tongues. In a survey of Pentecostal pastors in Chile, Lalive found that whereas only fifty-seven percent of them had spoken in tongues, a full ninety-eight percent had been instruments of divine healing. It is necessary, therefore, to understand the role of praying for the sick if one is to uncover the dynamics of Pentecostalism in Latin America.[23]

And this turns Pentecostalism into a very attractive faith, one that has a very practical application to one of the greatest needs of the masses of the continent. For one thing, it demonstrates that God alone can produce spectacular miracles in spite of the unexplainable power of sickness over their bodies. It also adds credibility to the faith and practices of many men and women who are either laughed at or have been despised and ostracised by their neighbours — usually in areas of utter poverty. Above all, it is a very real experience of power encounter, not only because of the popular belief that all sickness is produced by a demon or by the devil himself, but because demonic power is an every-day reality that can only be confronted with the Lord's power.[24] It is here that spiritism finds its greatest challenge, here that the effectiveness of prayer helps to convince young or weak believers who might be wavering between a total commitment to God and seeking the help of the spirits for the solution of their problems, primarily those that have to do with physical healing.

Fourth, it must be frankly admitted that these foci in prayer tend to produce a sense of superiority which, in turn, spawns harmful pride. Mention has already been made of the fact that a person who speaks in tongues frequently looks down on believers who do not. By the same token, lay people and pastors who may be instrumental in bringing about healing, are considered to be nothing less than miracle workers. They soon occupy a role established by the culture of Latin America, where a patron saint or the church/shrine where the saint is venerated, is looked upon as a very powerful person or place for spectacular miracles to happen. Pilgrimages are made to visit them and a following is developed in several other places.

Most Pentecostals, even though they formally reject this idea, have developed specific formulas and terms that exalt their experiences, especially when it comes to prayer. They speak of 'prayer of power', a 'chorus of power', a 'preacher of power', and even make use of these when looking for the solution to problems, and to make sure of guaranteed results. Fortunately, not all of those who use the terms or like the practices carry them to what could be their logical conclusions.

Neo-Pentecostal, charismatic groups and churches have much in common

with their Pentecostal predecessors, especially in the area of prayer. Their prayers are characterised by equal intensity and earnestness, with similar aims, and with genuine faith in the God to whom it is offered. Since the movement also shares many of its features with its counterparts in other parts of the world, not many distinctively Latin aspects can be found other than those already mentioned. There is no question, however, that the movement has infused new life into many churches and organisations. This is a major contribution which the Pentecostal churches had not been able to make in areas beyond their own immediate sphere of influence.

D. Joint Efforts

There is a growing sense of unity in prayer in many places throughout Latin America. Christians in large cities and even in whole countries are now being challenged to engage in prayer for a wide variety of worthy causes. Most recently several events have served as a challenge for a whole continent to pray — events such as the natural disasters in Mexico, Colombia, and El Salvador; or 'Continente '85', an evangelistic effort sponsored by the Luis Palau team, which dreamed of setting up a network of television stations in different countries to present the gospel message during Holy Week of that year; or the successful television hookup established by Campus Crusade for Christ to several centres of population in order to train a great number of workers for evangelism.

Incentives to become aligned with national and even continental communities to pray were given a great impetus during the decade of the 1960s with the programme of Evangelism in Depth, which started in several Central American countries and spread to some others in South America (and even to the Appalachia area in the United States, and to Portugal and France in Europe). This programme called for prayer to be an integral part of the early planning stages of the nation-wide evangelistic campaign which was to last for a whole year in a given country. The organisers recall:

> . . . we drew up a tentative outline which involved the following stages:
>
> First of all, to hold a special Conference for Christians Workers . . In the course of this Conference, we felt that the first emphasis should be waiting for the Lord in prayer . . .
>
> The second stage might be called one of mobilisation. We felt that prayer groups should be organised throughout the country, as many prayer cells as possible, and that daily prayer should be going up from Christians everywhere to seek the Lord's blessings upon the effort . . .[25]

There are also today large public gatherings associated with the Luis Palau Crusades. During one of them, in Guatemala, the government decreed a tight curfew because of political unrest. Thus, the large gatherings for prayer could not be held, but instead, Christian radio station TGN broadcast instructions to encourage two or three families meeting in private homes to pray together.[26] These were complemented by the action of one denomination which printed cards that stated: 'We pray for the Luis Palau Crusade before every meal', as well as by having a Spiritual Life Committee organise hundreds of prayer cells both in the capital city and the rest of the country.[27] These are but a few tokens of what goes on continuously.

Perhaps a new day is dawning in several countries in South America, where attempts have been made to foster prayer by using efficient and creative organisation. At the moment Venezuelan believers seem to be leading the way with a number of new activities, all started since 1983. Here, Armando R. Campos Castillo supports various ministries through his own ministry of prayer, called 'Cry for Venezuela'. He has also established three programmes, as follows:

> 1. 'Intercessors for Venezuela', in which 'thousands of believers have become involved . . . moved by a deep patriotic feeling . . . praying for the Salvation, Healing, and Liberation of Venezuela and its government rulers'.
> 2. A 'National Day to Cry for Venezuela', held for the first time on October 13, 1984, as a 'public act of prayer . . . [in which] Communities and their rulers could see and feel the evangelical people united in the most important streets and plazas, crying publicly on behalf of the problems and needs of the nation, and for each individual state'.
> 3. A 'House-School of Prayer', which 'represents the Lord's effort to increase intercessory prayer, fasting, vigils, and to destroy the works of Satan through the power of the Holy Spirit'. It is in this situation where 'brethren from different denominations do spiritual battle for the possession of the city and the establishment of the Kingdom of God'. There are plans afoot to hold a 'National Congress on Prayer' and to establish 'The National Network of Prayer'.[28]

Still in Venezuela, the 'National Prayer Assembly' for 'the evangelisation of the country' was called for February 24–March 1, 1985, supported by the Evangelical Council of Venezuela and the Fraternity of Evangelical Ministers. Its stated purpose was

> to serve all those who have a particular interest in Prayer in order to provide for them training concerning the development of Movements of Prayer in their denominations, in their cities or in the local churches, besides deepening the understanding of the spiritual bases of prayer.

It was also to be a 'continuation of the International [Prayer] Assembly', held in Seoul, Korea, in 1984, in order 'to share the teachings and the spiritual experience of Korea', by providing a series of seminars and workshops with topics on prayer.[29]

These examples point to the impact that the meeting in Korea has had on several individuals in different countries. Even though it is perhaps too early to make an adequate assessment of that event, Armanco Campos was decisively affected by it. In Colombia, Ana María Vogel, affiliated with the local IFES, also attended the assembly in Korea and is having an increasing influence locally, although no large movement or national gathering seems to be contemplated at this writing. Again, Cristina Mastrantono, of the Uruguay Bible Society, mentions the influence of Korea in her own nation, and speaks of 'a prayer movement both individual and national in scope', but very little is known about it at this time.

One thing is sure: COMIBAM — the Ibero-American Missionary Congress, which took place in November, 1987, in Brazil — has generated widespread and keen interest in prayer, first, for the Congress itself, and second, for missions in general. Its planning committee has placed a heavy emphasis on prayer as a basic part of missionary work. One of them states:

'Our desire is to organise thousands of prayer cells on behalf of missionary work. In fact, a prerequisite for participation in the congress in Brazil is to have organised one prayer group.'[30]

Its chairman, Rev Luis Bush, has prepared a detailed study guide for intercessory groups. It envisions groups of twelve persons, made up of young people, men and women meeting in each country to plead for (1) an awakening of a missionary vision in the family, the church, the nation, the continent; (2) the nations of the world. These groups are to meet weekly and are exhorted to pray that the Lord may send labourers into his harvest fields. It even includes a detailed, one-hour schedule to be carried on between 6.30 a.m. and 7.30 a.m., specifying breakdown by minutes to be dedicated to memorisation; teaching; group participation concerning the teaching of a passage about missions; prayer based on what has been learned; report on an assigned country; prayer for that country; testimony by a member of the group; prayer for that member, his family, his church and denomination, the country, and the continent. A chart is included in which specific passages for memorisation and study are included, as well as a detailed list of countries to pray for, leaving blanks for the study leaders to be assigned, the missionary lesson that is learned, the person to report about a particular country, and the person who is to give a personal testimony.[31]

While this plan seems overly detailed to some people, it clearly shows how the goals and ideas of the congress are being taken seriously. Prayer is not accidental, but is a human response to a very important divine imperative. In the mission congresses which are being held in different parts of the continent in preparation for the larger event, prayer plays a very significant role. Organisers and participants give evidence of trying to turn prayer for missions into a regular habit everywhere.

The opportunity to introduce the urgency of such a task came when two young Brazilian sisters from the First Baptist Church of Santo André, São Paulo, were captured in early 1986 by anti-Communist guerrillas in Angola. Míriam and Margarida Horvath were, subsequently, subjected to a terrible ordeal as they were forced to walk 700 kilometres, although they both had burns on their hair and legs and one of them suffered hepatitis while the other was starting to suffer from malaria; theirs was a 25–day journey. When the Evangelical community in Brazil heard about their plight, it united in prayer and fasting for their deliverance; their own home church set up a prayer chain around the clock. Negotiations were then conducted by the Red Cross and after 59 days they were released, having borne a shining witness of their faith and resolve. There is no question throughout Brazil that the happy ending came as a result of fervent prayer. Not only were the sisters released — their captors gave them a warm and touching send off — but upon their return to Brazil and their church, 18 Brazilians decided to give their lives for missionary service in Angola.[32]

Needless to say, this incident has contributed to bringing people to the realisation that unless missions is strongly supported by prayer to the Lord of the harvest, it will be impossible to accomplish this God-given task. Furthermore, as it stands now, COMIBAM signals the beginning of a major missionary movement with great significance not only for Latin America, but for the whole world. It could be the single most important contribution of this continent to the world church.

III. FINAL OBSERVATIONS

It is evident that Latin America shares with other continents some of the practices of prayer common to Christians everywhere. There is also little question that the Evangelical churches have been schooled in the doctrinal distinctives that are a part of the heritage of Evangelicals all over the world. Authors such as Andrew Murray and James Hastings have had their words translated into Spanish and Portuguese for a number of decades. More recently, David Hubbard, Catherine Marshall, and also a host of so-called charismatic authors, have also had their works translated. There is no apparent dearth of the more popular literature on the subject, a fact that can account for the many common features.

There are nevertheless some rather unique elements that can provide useful lessons, both positive and negative, from the prayer habits of Latin American Evangelicals. These might be summarised as follows:

1. Their prayer is doctrinal in content. Prayer is offered within the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, as E. A Núñez has already mentioned in this book. It could be added here that the Father is seen as the personal Creator and Sustainer of the universe, not as a remote being, but one who is very close to those who call upon his name. Jesus Christ is the perfect mediator between God and man, not just one of the many intermediaries in an ever increasing pantheon, nor as a dead, crucified and suffering image in defeat. He is the living Saviour who shares the blessings of his risen life with those who put their trust in him. As for the Holy Spirit, it could be said that he is still being discovered by many. As a whole, prayer is understood to be communication with the supernatural, transcendent, personal God.

2. Their prayer is intensely personal. Although the highly individualised Latin American soul carefully guards the secrets of its innermost being — and prayer in the intimacy of the personal closet is almost impregnable — there is a sense of identification in public prayer. In this sense, public prayers are the proud expression of the individual who asserts ownership of the praises, requests, and results of those public utterances.

3. Their prayer expects miracles. In many cases, it is thought, it is useless to engage in prayer unless spectacular results can be expected. This is especially evident in praying for the sick, when some Pentecostals make a

> fine distinction . . . between the gift of healing and the gift of miracles. Healing is the supernatural intervention of the power of God in cases that apparently could also be cured by doctors in hospitals, if the patients could afford them. Miracles, on the other hand, involve cases that have deteriorated beyond the possibilities of medical science . . . Both are present among Latin American Pentecostals, but healing is much more common than miracles.[33]

Whether this distinction is accepted or not, the fact remains that divine intervention as an answer to prayer is expected in every case.

4. Their prayer shows utter dependence on God. When Evangelicals have learned to trust in the personal, living God; and when life in general is difficult, full of adversities, and capable of driving an individual almost to the brink of desperation, the God of the Scriptures proves a reliable bulwark on which to depend. The Evangelical believer finds solace in God's omnipotence

as well as in his immutablity, making a clear distinction between the living God and all other supernatural beings or forces.

5. Their prayer takes God's commands seriously. The emphasis on the miraculous, pointed out in number 3 above, combined with an utter dependence on God, has more recently resulted in a renewed sense of responsibility toward God's demands. The reports of evangelistic crusades, and the expectations of the upcoming COMIBAM, are but two examples of such a response. This is because of the firm belief that theirs is a God of the impossible; that he is the only one who is able to touch people's hearts, turn them to himself, and is capable of making events, circumstances, and people in authority work for his purposes. Armando Campos in Venezuela and the Horvath sisters in Angola are vivid examples of the reality of God's intervention when his demands are taken seriously.

6. Their prayer is somewhat lacking in social concern. Much has been written on this subject during the last few years, and it has sparked not a few controversies. Wagner devotes an entire chapter of his book to this subject, entitling it: 'Are Pentecostals on a Social Strike?'.[34] After defending the case for the primacy of the spiritual dimension as the task of the church while at the same time pointing to some concrete examples of social involvement, he concludes:

> Evidence shows that Pentecostals in Latin America are not on a 'social strike', as some might think. They know the gospel is relevant to the whole man, and to man in society. Their approach to solving social problems might differ considerably from that of some Christians in the more traditional denominations, but it is no less a concern for humanity. Since they have not allowed their concern for humanity to degenerate into humanism, however, they have conserved social strength. Therein, they have become an instrument in the hands of the Holy Spirit to bring the message of liberation to Latin American people in a highly relevant and effective way.[35]

On a somewhat similar note, Greenway states:

> Prayer is the Portales [an interdenominational, Pentecostal-leaning church in Mexico City] church's principal response to the plight of the urban poor. Any man with a burden is welcome to speak out and present his need before the Lord and the church. The ministry does not end there, however; the Portales church has outdistanced most old-line denominations by operating a kind of credit union to help its members in times of financial crisis. Moreover, the four pastors and their assistants serve unofficially as employment agents. In all, the Portales church is a true 'Haven for the Masses,' a place where God's concern for human needs, both spiritual and material, is reflected.[36]

While to many people these are quite satisfactory ways of bringing some good benefits to the community as a whole, others — increasingly numerous — consider them as alienating and egocentric expressions of a religious faith that falls far short of the demands of the gospel. At any rate, the pattern of behaviour and the actual record of Evangelicals has left but a meagre impact on the social scene in Latin America. Even though they are considered good and honest citizens by the greater public, they have not been able to capitalise on this asset in order to bring about the kind of change that is urgently needed in a continent under the power of Satan and with the majority of its citizens in

a desperate plight. Occasionally one may hear about prayer meetings called to pray for specific and urgent needs in a community, but by and large prayer has not been geared to produce radical change in systems, social trends, and overwhelming problems in all areas of society. Perhaps a new day is dawning with what has already been mentioned concerning the movement sparked by Armando Campos in Venezuela. We all pray that this will be true in the very near future.

IV. CONCLUSION

In evangelical practice, the prayer life of Christians in Latin America has produced both good and questionable models. If not everything is totally satisfactory, nevertheless there is much for which to thank God. There still remains a paucity of good leadership that can raise up a following in a prayer movement. Yet some very encouraging examples of good leaders could prove to be the determining factor for a true prayer movement in the years to come. We should all pray to that end.

16

Lessons from the Prayer Habits of the Church in Africa

TITE TIÉNOU

I. INTRODUCTION

Worship precedes theology. We all learn to pray before we learn to reflect on the contents and meanings of our prayers.[1] Worship, however defined, constitutes an important element of religious life. Furthermore worship and prayer are so interrelated that they are sometimes indistinguishable. Worship and prayer, major components of religious experience, are really two sides of the same coin. As F. Heiler notes,

> . . . prayer is the centre of religion, the soul of piety . . . Without prayer faith remains a theoretical conviction; worship is only an external and formal act, moral action is without spiritual depth; man remains at a distance from God.[2]

This suggests that right theology begins, continues and ends with right prayer.

If prayer is the mother of theology, then anyone interested in developing an authentic African Christian theology should seek a greater understanding of prayer in African Christian communities. In fact, an understanding of prayer in African Christianity may be more helpful in ascertaining the real status of Christian theologising in the continent than focusing on many of the issues currently being discussed.

Yet one is surprised at the paucity of materials published on prayer in African Christianity. Even Evangelicals, who think they are close to grassroots concerns, have yet to examine the worship and ministry of the local churches. There are, of course, studies on prayer in African Traditional Religions or in the so-called African Independent Churches. But very few, if any, focus specifically on prayer in 'conventional' African Christianity. In light of this, my purpose is to study the prayer life of African Christians against the background of the structure and emphases of prayer in African traditional religions.

II. STRUCTURE AND EMPHASES OF PRAYER IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS

It may seem strange, at first, to build our understanding of prayer in African

Christianity on the structure and emphases of prayer in African traditional religions. This approach is legitimate, however, because one's 'Christian mind will continue to be influenced by what was in it before. And this is as true for groups as for persons'.[3] It may even be possible to detect more continuity between one's past and present in matters pertaining to worship, prayer and spirituality, than in other areas of life. Be that as it may, the prayer life of African Christians cannot be understood and appreciated apart from the context of pre-Christian African religion. I shall therefore present a brief outline of the basic structure of prayers in African traditional religions. I shall also point out the major emphases of these prayers.

Heiler defines the essence of prayer as

> *a living communion of the religious man with God, conceived as personal and present in experience, a communion which reflects the forms of the social relations of humanity.* This is the essence of prayer.[4]

One does not have to follow Heiler in his reductionist understanding of prayer which makes it only a social phenomenon. One should nevertheless recognise that the structure of people's prayer does indeed reflect an aspect of their social organisation and their worldview.

A major worldview assumption of African societies is that the world is orderly and life is essentially good. The many accidents and vicissitudes of life which disrupt human existence are attributed to evil beings and enemies who delight in causing chaos and misery. Most Africans therefore live with a keen sense of the precariousness of life. They consequently spend much time and energy seeking for protection and for protectors against the numerous prowling adversaries. Religion, in this context, has an empowering and a 'repairing' function. Religion empowers people so that they can neutralise their enemies by destroying their plans. Religion also reestablishes order through the performance of rituals. These may be the reasons behind A. J. Raboteau's claim that in the Yoruba worldview 'the essence of religion was to "prevent misfortune and maximise good fortune".'[5] Since prayer is a religious act, it will be used to promote peace and prosperity to the praying community or individual.

This worldview provides the background for the basic structure of prayer in African Traditional Religions. According to E. Mveng, the triangle best depicts the structure of African prayer. He bases this observation on his analysis of Bantu prayer, which he describes as a drama with three actors: God, man and the adversary.[6] The prayers of African religions are therefore viewed as petitions to God for help against one's enemies. For God is the only equitable judge; human beings can trust him because he is their natural ally.[7]

The triangular structure of prayer in African Traditional Religions helps us understand the contents and emphases of traditional prayers. On the one hand, if God is both dependable and our natural ally, then we can petition him and expect him to comply with our wishes. On the other hand, if life is supposed to be good, filled with health, longevity, peace, potency, sufficient rainfall and crops, then these things will be the recurring themes of prayers. In short, the model prayer of African Traditional Religions might be: 'Deliver me from material ills and replace them with abundant things.'[8]

Limiting himself to West African prayers, K. Amponsah notes that

> the most important aspect of the prayer is the petition.. . . The petition is an expression of the will of man, who asks favours from dependable beings for himself and his well wishers and damnation for his adversaries.. . . The petition is materialistic.[9]

Even the very terminology of prayer suggests that the one who prays views himself and/or his community in an imploring relationship to God and to other objects of worship. For instance, E. I. Metuh discusses three Igbo terms for prayer, two of which mean to plead with or to beg.[10] In the same vein, the most common words for prayer in Bambara (Jula), Bobo and Boomu also mean to ask or to beg. We may safely conclude that the word 'prayer' connotes asking and petition in the minds of most Africans in the traditional context. Surely this mindset does not disappear in those who become Christian. In fact, the assurance of efficacious prayers may be one of the motivations for joining the various Christian groups in Africa.[11]

Before we examine some of the implications of the foregoing for Christian praying in Africa, we must note the fact that prayer, like the rest of life in Africa, is essentially communal. Both Mbiti and Shorter agree that community prayer is more typical in African religions than private, solitary prayer.[12]

III. IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN PRAYING IN AFRICA

African Christians, like adepts of traditional religions, have prayers for every occasion of life. Consequently, when D. Ndofunsu states that 'the Kimbanguist Christian prays before undertaking any action',[13] he could have easily included other Christian groups. In this respect, African Christians differ from both the Greeks and so-called modern man. Heiler observes that

> for modern thought, dominated by Copernicus and Kant, prayer is as great a stone of stumbling as it was for the enlightened philosophy of the Greeks.[14]

Those of us who are simultaneously children of Copernicus, Kant and the Greeks need to rediscover the importance and centrality of prayer, especially when we claim to know God. Here, then, is the first lesson we learn from the prayer life of African Christians. It calls us back to Old Testament spirituality. For, in the words of E. H. Peterson, 'whereas the Greeks had a story for every occasion, the Hebrews had a prayer for every occasion'.[15] It reminds us that our theological stories are useless if they are not rooted in prayer.

The second lesson which the prayer life of African Christians teaches us is the importance of community prayer. To be sure, Western individualistic spirituality has affected African Christianity.[16] But communal prayer is still more prevalent. This reminds all of us that worship and prayer should not be separated. E. H. Peterson, in an interview in *Christianity Today*, states what present-day Western individualistically inclined Christians need to hear and practise. According to Peterson,

> The paradigmatic prayer is not solitary but in community. The fundamental biblical context is prayer.

> In the long history of Christian spirituality, community prayer is most important, then individual prayer.[17]

Christians everywhere need to keep worship and theology together. If genuine theology is doxology then a rediscovery of the centrality of prayer is indispensable. This, to my mind, is the major lesson we can learn from prayer in African Christianity.

17

Lessons from the Prayer Habits of the Puritans

ROY WILLIAMS

I. INTRODUCTION

> I will tell you as best I can what I do personally when I pray . . . First, when I feel that I have become cool and joyless in prayer because of other tasks or thoughts (for the flesh and the devil always impede and obstruct prayer), I take my little psalter, hurry to my room . . . and, as time permits, I say quietly to myself and word-for-word the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and, if I have time, some words of Christ or of Paul, or some Psalms, just as a child might do . . .[1]

This was Luther's advice to his good friend, Peter the barber. Luther's early theological and pastoral career was deeply coloured with an interest in Christian spirituality. His first publication in 1516 was an edition of the mystical *Theologia Germanica*. Three years later this interest had not been diverted by the theological storm his Ninety-five Theses had generated, for he published *An Exposition of the Lord's Prayer for Simple Laymen* in 1519, and in the same year *On Rogationtide Prayer and Procession* ['Rogationtide' refers to the days immediately before Ascension Day in liturgical calendars]. Reading these works reveals Luther's progression away from a medieval Catholic spirituality into an Evangelical Protestant one.

Luther's exemplary ability in prayer is recognised by both Protestants and Roman Catholics. Josef Lortz, a Roman Catholic, says, 'Luther possessed a mighty power of prayer. He was rooted in God . . . he did not play at Christianity'.[2] What is frequently overlooked is what Walter Kohler has said: 'About prayer there was no conflict in the camp of the Reformers — this inmost sanctuary they shared between them'.[3] There is uniformity in content and in their teaching about prayer. They wrote extensively on the subject and shared a common interest in the concept and practice of prayer.

In spite of the interest of the Reformers and the fact that the church is today facing what one modern biblical scholar has called 'a crisis in piety',[4] Protestant church historians have tended to neglect, or even to show an aversion for, a study of the history of their own spirituality. Yet Protestantism has a rich heritage of experiential Christianity and practical piety, and certainly not least in this heritage is that of the Puritans, which Bouyer, a Roman Catholic, reminds us represents 'high-water marks in Protestant

spirituality and, we have no hesitation in adding, in Christian spirituality as a whole'.[5] A careful study and sifting of this heritage may reveal much that can be recovered and may provide a means of meeting the present crisis.

Aside from pragmatic considerations, and the hope that a study of this uncharted area of our past will help us better understand our present, there are various reasons why a study of Puritan piety and spirituality requires prime consideration if any attempt is to be made to uncover the various strata of the development of North Atlantic Protestant spirituality. The first is the obvious direct connection between Puritanism and those groups — Baptists, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians — in the English speaking world who are directly descended from them by ecclesiastical lineage. Secondly, there is the impact of Puritan spirituality upon both the Arminian and the Calvinistic wings of Methodism,[6] the one breaking off to form a distinctive denomination, and the other continuing to find expression in strengthening the Evangelical movement in the Anglican church, a movement which was also heavily influenced by Puritan spirituality.[7] Thirdly, Puritanism helped provide the spiritual catalyst that gave continental Pietism its initial momentum.[8] The spirituality of all these groups and movements will be understood only as we properly understand that of the Puritans.

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

One of their own number, John Geree, can speak for the Puritans in order that we might appreciate the importance of prayer in their philosophy of the Christian life:

> The Old English Puritane was such a one, that honoured God above all . . . His first care was to serve God, and therein he did not what was good in his owne, but in God's sight, making the Word of God the rule of his worship . . . He was much in prayer; with it he began, and closed the day. In it he exercised in his closet, family, and publike assembly. He esteemed that manner of prayer best, whereby the gift of God's expressions were varied according to present wants and occasions . . .[9]

This description of an 'Old English Puritane' could readily be applied to any Puritan. He was one that 'honoured God above all', and 'his first care was to serve God'. The Westminster Divines' *Larger and Shorter Catechisms* are in agreement when they begin by stating: 'Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy him forever'.[10]

If a Puritan was going to glorify and serve God he felt much prayer was essential. Thomas Doolittle reminded his listeners, 'Calling upon God is . . . such a principal way of serving the Lord that it is frequently put for the whole worship of God . . .'.[11] Doolittle was by no means unique among his Puritan brethren in his estimation of the importance of prayer. Among the many, Smauel Hieron typically emphasised the importance of prayer by saying, 'This is all I will say on the behalf of Prayer, that as it is one of God's titles of honour to be stiled, "The hearer of Prayers", so "to call upon the name of the Lord", is put for the whole duty, and as it were the life and substance of a Christian'.[12]

III. THE PURITANS' USE OF THEOLOGY

Book One of the *Institutes* is devoted to *The Knowledge of God the Creator*. Here Calvin devotes one chapter to a discussion of 'How We May Apply This Doctrine to Our Greater Benefit'. In Book Three there are chapters on 'Meditation on the Future Life' and 'Prayer, Which is the Chief Exercise of Faith, and by Which We Daily Receive God's Benefits'. Calvin's purpose in writing the *Institutes*, Jean-Daniel Benoit contends, is that readers might have a '*summa* of what is useful to know in order to be a Christian and to live as a Christian'. To be more exact, 'theology was for him [Calvin] the servant of piety and never a science sufficient in itself. His thought is always directed towards life; always he descends from principles to their practical application; always his pastoral concern appears'.[13] This outlook of Calvin's is true theology, and it is the outlook of the Puritans regarding the discipline.

Tragically, our contemporary theology tends to limit its research and discussion to the more objective data of the discipline. On the Continent in the seventeenth century, many Christians fell into the trap by which modern theology has been ensnared. The Puritans saw through this and realised that how God answers prayer, how the inward workings of the Holy Spirit in the Christian at prayer are to be experienced, and the understanding of the Lord's Prayer, are as much topics for the theologian to explore as justification, the nature of God, and the person and death of Christ. As a result, there is no tension in Puritanism between theology and piety.

No doubt the Puritans' Biblicism helped them here, as did their interest in experiential religion. But it must be appreciated that the Puritans were also consciously developing topics further and heightening emphases touched on by the great Reformers.[14] This is theology at its best. This is the way theology should unfold.

In following this path, the Puritans develop a type of theological literature Richard Baxter calls 'Affectionate Practical'[15] treatises. Their purpose, John Downame explains, is to develop 'that part of Divinity . . . which consisteth more in experience and practice, than in theory . . .; and more principally tendeth to the sanctification of the heart, than the informing of the judgment . . .; and to stirring up . . . in the duties of godly life'.[16] Always working from this basic principle, the Puritans bring their doctrine down from the lofty heights of metaphysical debate and use it as an inducement to devotion and worship. It is the desire of these writers to see developed a highly fervent and intimate relationship between God and the individual Christian.

The intimate encounter with God is to be realised primarily through prayer. Therefore, preaching on Ps. 73:28, 'But it is good for me to draw near to God', Richard Sibbes titles his sermon 'The Saints Happiness; Showing Mans Happinesse is in Communion with God'.[17] In another sermon, 'A Breathing After, or Desire of Gods Presence', Sibbes argues that prayer is the way 'we maintain acquaintance with God'.[18] Again, speaking of prayer, David Clarkson reminds his hearers that God will 'meet' his people, 'commune with them', and 'discover and communicate himself to them'.[19] Quotations such as these serve to illustrate that Puritans understand clearly an important truth found in the Fourth Gospel and the letters by the same evangelist: 'For John,' A. M. Hunter tells us, 'eternal life is getting to know (*ginōskōsi*; present tense) the only real God through Jesus Christ, . . . Such

knowledge of God is not the acquisition of theological learning . . . [but] is . . . personal communion with God through Christ.'[20]

'Petitions reveal more candidly than anything else a man's thought of himself and his . . . God'.[21] This incisive statement, by W. R. Matthews, is clearly mirrored in the works of the Puritans. Coming from another direction, Helmut Thielicke states, 'The one to whom I cry and to whom I appeal determines the theme of my prayer; is the basis of its hope, confers its confidence, and denotes its content.'[22] The Puritans with their classic orthodox theism, have a great God; transcendent, infinite, self-existent, incomprehensible, almighty. Yet, this God is fully personal and desirous of a filial relationship with men and women which is maintained through a life of prayer.

IV. THE PURITANS' USE OF THE BIBLE

The Puritans must be given credit in the field of biblical studies. They were committed to high academic standards of exegesis.[23] By the time the Long Parliament was in session, the real advancements in biblical studies were being made in England rather than on the Continent. Among their number the Puritans had some of the finest biblical scholars the English church has produced. Much of their material is academically valid today. Some of it shows a method so advanced for its age that only in the last part of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century has scholarship caught up.

The Puritans' handling of the Lord's Prayer mirrors clearly their biblical expertise. Contemporary studies emphasise the eschatological and Jewish nature of the prayer; the Puritan expositions laid emphasis on the same points. The similarity to what modern scholars are saying is striking;[24] much of the Puritans' exposition has a timelessness to it.

Charnock's observation regarding the ramifications to the preface of the Lord's Prayer is valid today as it was in his day: 'The consideration of God's being a Father is the highest ground of confidence in prayer . . . It is a glory Christ hath purchased for, and given to every believer, to call God "Father".'[25] Also sound, nothwithstanding centuries, is the *Shorter Catechism's* explanation of the preface, that it 'teacheth us to draw near to God with all holy reverence and confidence, as children to a father, able and ready to help us'.[26]

There are points at which it is obvious that the Puritans are men of their own age. An example is the way they handle the fifth petition; they tend to interpret it in the light of the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith and hence read more into the first part than is explicit. They draw back from letting the second half, 'as we forgive others', speak fully for itself.

There are also times when the Puritans' frame of reference allows them to develop theological motifs from which our *own* age's intellectual outlook draws back. Obvious is the importance of prayer itself. Also, in defining prayer as the *Shorter Catechism* does — 'Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things . . .' — pre-eminence is given to petition.[27] Many today find this incompatible with either their view of God or their scientific world view and prefer to stress contemplation, worship, or adoration. However, this is ignoring an extremely important factor: 'Prolegomena to the

theology of Christian prayer will naturally begin by observing the way in which the Christian Church in its beginnings was accustomed to pray. And it is plain enough that prayer in the New Testament means quite simply that part of our communion with God which consists in petition.' In the teachings of Jesus, the assumption is 'that when we pray it is to ask God for what we need'. And for that matter, J. Burnaby rightly observes, 'every clause in the Lord's Prayer is petition'.[28] It is apparent, then, that the Puritans' definition of prayer is consistent with their theological presupposition regarding the authority of Scripture.

The use of argumentative prayer 'is an excellent thing, beloved', says Richard Sibbes. 'Study the Scriptures, and . . . study all the arguments whereby holy men have prevailed with God . . . to see in what cases those arguments were used. They are of use and force to prevail with God.' The interrelationship of this to the promises of God and praying in accordance with his will is reflected in Sibbes' saying, 'It is a pitiful thing . . . for Christians . . . to come to God only with bare, naked petitions . . . and have not reasons to press God out of his own word. They cannot bind God with his own promise, nor with arguments that he hath been bound with before'. The situation is analogous to a parent answering a little child because he cries, but when he 'is of grown years, the father looks for arguments that are moving to press him with'.[29]

Argumentative prayer is illustrated by Thomas Hall when he instructs, 'We must stir up ourselves that we may lay hold on God, and use argumentative prayer, as Moses did, Exod. xxxii. 11–13. God loves to see us fervent, when it is for his own glory and his church's good. Tell him the cause is his; had it been our own cause we had been silent, but the cause is his. And the people that are oppressed are his, and the enemies are his; . . . therefore beseech him to arise'.[30]

The modern mind, with its philosophical and scientific proclivity, is also vexed by the idea of 'arguments' or 'reasons' whereby God may be pressed to grant one's petitions. However, such concepts as argumentative prayer, which is highly developed in Puritan writers, are quite obviously biblical. Because the Puritan's outlook is dominated by the Bible, it allows them to accept the Jewish viewpoint of the Old and New Testament writers in which the intercourse between God and man is cast in the form of an anthropomorphic relationship.

V. THE PURITANS' PASTORAL OBJECTIVE

The Puritans hoped to see the piety and spiritual experiences found on the sacred page reproduced in the lives of their Christian contemporaries. If this is to be accomplished, they realised that far more than scholarship is necessary. Successful pastoral endeavour is also crucial. In his exposition of the *Pastoral Epistles*, Calvin reveals his understanding of human nature, an understanding shared by Puritans. He says,

> He [Paul] tells Timothy to be instant in *reproving, rebuking, exhorting* thus indicating that we need many incentives to keep us on the right course. If we were as teachable as we should be, Christ's ministers could guide us merely by

> pointing out the right way. But as things are, sane advice and merely moderate exhortations are not enough to shake off our unresponsiveness, unless there is added to them the greater vehemence of reproofs and chidings.[31]

Calvin's advice was put into practice with increasing thoroughness from the time of William Perkins to the close of the Puritan era. In telling Christians they have God-given responsibility to pray, the Puritan pastors do not stop by reminding men that the Bible enjoins them to pray. They marshal their verses, and other arguments, into organised ranks and press hard upon the Christian until his carnal will is subdued, and he surrenders by saying, 'Yes, I will let God's Word rule over me; I will pray.'

It is one thing to convince a man of his responsibilities; it is another to show him how to perform them. Here again the Puritans are a model of pastoral wisdom. They realise that most Christians will identify with A. M. Hunter's question: 'Do you wish to know whether you can pray of this or that thing in Jesus' name?' But the Puritans have grasped what Hunter fails to; his answer, given as another question, is not sufficient: 'Then ask yourself: Can it be legitimately covered by the petitions of the Lord's Prayer?'[32] In reality, for many this is the crux, and not the answer. They want to know if the fourth petition allows them to ask for 'a house', 'tools', 'books for scholars', or 'ammunition for souldiers'.[33] Once the pastor has laid a good groundwork from Scripture, it is still necessary that he take his flock by the hand and lead them step by step down the pathway of prayer. In their 'meaning' and 'teaching of the petition', written prayers, and then works on prayer in general, the Puritans do this. Nothing is left out. In the pastoral application of the text, the Puritans are in a class of their own.

Here the strength of the Puritan pastoral theology and casuistry is seen. They develop a full concept of prayer from the various seminal teachings found in the New Testament. The combination of components they use partially explains their phenomenal success as pastors. A high standard of biblical competence is brought to the text. There is thoroughness in treating the text, or topic, as they bring exegesis, systematic theology, church history, psychology and personal experience into play in a harmonious and balanced way. Practical application is always the fruit of their scholarship, and the application is detailed. In preaching, the goal is practical; to teach and convince. Finally, there is a thorough understanding of the questions parishioners ask. This is a combination rarely found in the church's history, and yet in Puritanism it is found in depth. Undoubtedly, it is this that created the demand for Puritan works on the Continent as well as their great influence on Evangelicals in other eras. In doing this, Puritans were able to make the Scriptures contemporary and alive for their people.

The theological and pastoral expertise of the Puritans is reflected in the way they unfold the meaning of the first petition of the Lord's Prayer. Defining *the name of God* and *hallowed*, James Ussher, with others, says, 'By the *Name* of God, we are to understand God himself . . .: his Essence, and all things by which he is known unto us'. And 'hallowed' means 'to set apart a thing from the common use, . . . to separate it from all profane and unholy abuse, to a holy and reverend use'.[34]

The implications of this for prayer are quite comprehensive. It means, Ussher says, 'That as God is glorious in himself, so he may be declared . . . and acknowledged by all men, but especially by my selfe, to be most holy'.[35]

According to Thomas Manton, this petition is put first in the prayer for several reasons. One of these is to show us

> that this must be the end of all our requests. All that we desire and pray for, in behalf of ourselves and others, must be subordinate to this end . . . See all the other petitions in this prayer, how they are suited to this end . . . When we say, 'Thy Kingdom come', what do we beg that for, but ultimately the glory of God? . . . When we ask for our daily bread, . . . it is still that he may be glorified in our comfortable use of the creature . . . When we ask for the remission of sins, it is that God may be glorified in Christ . . . When we beg freedom from temptation, it is that we may not dishonour God . . . When we ask deliverance from evil; Ps. 1:15 'Call upon me . . .: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me'.[36]

William Perkins gives a more personal application, stating, 'The scope . . . is an earnest desire that we might set forth God's glorie, whatsoever become of us'. One expresses this desire by praying something like, 'O Lord open our eies that we may aright know thee, and acknowledge the greatness of thy power, wisdome, justice, and mercie, . . . and grant that when we use any of . . . [God's creatures], we may therein honour thee, and use them reverently to thy glory'. He recommends praying that a desire for 'the zeale of God's glorie may be kindled in our hearts, and that we may . . . lead a godly and upright life . . . that we may honour our heavenly Father'.[37]

Setting forth 'the particulars to be prayed for', William Gouge employs three main headings: (1) 'Such graces in ourselves as may enable us to hallow the name of God'; (2) 'Such graces in others as may enable them thereto'; (3) 'Such an over-ruling providence in God, as may direct everything thereto'.[38]

The Puritans realise it is no easy matter for a depraved person to seek God's interest before his own. *The Larger Catechism* begins its exposition of petitions one through five with an acknowledgement of man's depravity and his inability to please God. Manton, proposing tests to determine if our prayers for God's glory are pure, suggests if we are sincere 'then we would be content . . . provided the name of God . . . be magnified, no matter what becomes of us, and our interest and concernment'. Our thoughts may also help us determine whether or not our motives are without admixture. 'When you are praying for a public mercy, . . . what runs through your thought? Revenge, safety, and your personal happiness, or God's glory?' And also in 'prayer for strength and quickening, what runs in your mind? Are you entertaining . . . dreams of applause and . . . popular acclamation?'.[39]

VI. THE PURITANS' INTEREST IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit, both at the biblical and at the experiential levels, receives a great deal of Puritan attention, and the theology the Puritans develop is one of their unique contributions to the church. They could write iconoclastically or constructively on the topic, record mystical encounters with the Spirit in diaries, and refer to such experiences in sermons, though usually not in the first person singular, without any inhibitions whatsoever. For the Puritans the doctrine of the Holy Spirit was, as Baxter said, 'a most practical Article of Belief'.[40] Consequently, if the Puritans made a unique contribution to the

labours of the Reformers, it was in giving Protestantism a fully-developed doctrine of the Holy Spirit. In so doing they started a theological tradition in the English-speaking world which continued to find expression until the early part of this century.

The Reformation, by directing attention to the New Testament, was obliquely directing attention to the Holy Spirit. The early Reformers, however, did not develop their doctrine and experience of the Spirit as the Puritans did.

From its early inception the English Reformation had amongst its lobbyists men of an intensely pietistic and evangelical persuasion. Bishop Hooper, who was primarily concerned with the ecclesiastical controversies of his day, wrote 'his Scriptural expositions, . . . which are indicative of a piety not generally found in the England of his time. If these are read in the light of his life and character, one is forced to conclude that in him there is something new in the making'.[41] Coupled with this pietism is an emphasis on the Spirit known and felt, and 'certain it is that Hooper was not afraid to "feel" something as a result of his Christian commitment'.[42]

Hooper's fellow martyr John Bradford reflects an even stronger experiential and pietistic strain: 'Seldom in the history of the Church, except among the early martyrs and later mystics, were the demands of spiritual perfection set so high'. He put stress on the Holy Spirit and the feeling of one's relationship with God. Bradford's life and writings are filled with the spirit and practice of prayer. Yet, like the later Puritans, 'his great respect for the written Word as God's final revelation kept him from running off into subjectivism'.[43] In Bradford we find a spiritual model that is truly the proto-Puritan.

Several factors contributed to make this period pre-eminently the time for bringing pneumatology to its fruition. First of all it was an age of theological orthodoxy. It was also an era interested in experience. To the Puritan this meant an evangelical experience of the reality of the life of God in the individual man. Theology was not simply that men might know *about* God, but that they might *know* him personally and individually through an experience of the new birth.

Having begun in the Spirit the Puritan did not try to continue in the flesh. He endeavoured to govern his whole life so that he might be built up and increase in the Spirit. The primary way in which the Holy Spirit was expected to be manifested was in the Christian's prayers.

Perkins would 'give us to understand, that although a man be regenerate, yet he cannot pray as he ought, unless he be still moved, helped and stirred by the Holy Ghost'.[44] Here Perkins is simply restating what Paul told the Christians in Rome when he said, 'the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what to pray as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh request for us with sighs, which cannot be expressed (8:26 G.V.)'. This verse, along with Rom. 8:15, 26–27; Gal. 4:6 and Eph. 6:18 were the main foundation stones on which the Puritans built their doctrine of prayer in the Spirit.

Manton's conviction was that where the Spirit 'dwelleth in the heart, he discovereth himself mostly in prayer; . . . The Spirit's gracious operations are manifested especially in fitting us for, and assisting us in, the duty of prayer'.[45]

The question that the Puritans saw arising from such verses as Romans 8:28 was, how does the Spirit, who indwells the Christian as a Spirit of supplication, actually assist the Christian in his prayers? The answer is a composite one.

The Holy Spirit, William Gurnall says, 'doth not breathe in us as one through a trunk or trumpet, which is a mere passive instrument'.[46] For that matter, Manton further cautions,

> This is not so to be understood as if the matter and words of prayer were immediately to be inspired by the Holy Ghost, as he inspired the holy men of God in their prophesying and penning the holy Scripture . . . there is a great deal of difference between both these; partly because they were immediately moved and infallibly assisted by the Spirit, so moved and extraordinarily borne through, that they could not err and miscarry; they were free from any fault, failing, or corruption in the matter, form, or words wherein this was expressed; all was purely divine. But in our prayers we find the contrary by sad experience . . . And yet the prayer is the prayer of the Spirit, that is directed, ordered, and quickened by the Spirit.[47]

Gurnall also postulates that 'there is a concurrence both of the Spirit of God and the soul or spirit of the Christian . . . The Spirit doth not pray in him as that the Christian doth not exercise his own faculties in the duty'.[48]

Baxter warns against the fanatics who would rely wholly on the Spirit and teaches that the Spirit uses the Scriptures, 'faithful Pastors and Teachers' as well as 'Reason, Memory, Study, Books, Methods, Forms, etc.' in 'their proper place in Subordination to Christ and to his Spirit'. The fact of the matter is, 'the Spirit doth incline our Hearts to the diligent use of all those means'.[49]

Regarding the Spirit's primary help in prayer, we will focus first on what the Puritans often called 'the grace of prayer'. Baxter, for instance, says,

> The Spirit by *illumination, Quickening* and *Sanctification,* giveth us an *habitual Acquaintance* with our *sins*, our *Wants*, with the *Word of Precept* and *Promise*, with *God,* with *Christ,* with *Grace,* with Heaven. And it giveth us a *Habit* of Holy *Love* to *God*, and *Goodness*, and *Thankfulness* for Mercy and *Faith* in Christ, and the Life to come, and Desires of Perfection, and *Hatred* of Sin: And he that hath *all these*, hath a constant *Habit of Prayer* in him: For Prayer is nothing but the expression with the Tongue of these Graces in the Heart.[50]

The *Larger Catechism's* answer to 'How doth the Spirit help us to pray?' is: 'The Spirit helpeth . . . by enabling us to understand both for whom, and what, and how prayer is to be made; and by working and quickening in our hearts . . . those apprehensions, affections, and graces, which are requisite for the right performance of that duty'.[51] To be noted is that both Baxter and the *Catechism* see the Spirit's help in quickening graces in the Christian's heart.

Thomas Manton explains why this is an important work of the Holy Spirit:

> There is a holy vehemency and fervour required in prayer, opposite to that careless formality and deadness which otherwise is found in us; . . . there is a warmth and a life and a vigour in prayer . . . A flow of words may come from our natural temper, but these lively motions and strong desires from the spirit of God. It is notable that the prayer which is produced in us by the Spirit is represented by the notion of a cry, Abba, Father; not with respect to the loudness . . . but the earnestness of affection.[52]

In addition, Gurnall observes the Spirit fills the saint 'with a sense of God's

greatness, his own nothingness and baseness, as makes him . . . reverence the divine majesty he speakes unto'. As it is part of the Spirit's ministry to convict of sin, he will also enable the saint to 'confess sin with an aching heart'. Gurnall describes this experience:

> By his divine breath he raiseth the clouds of the saint's past sins, and when he hath overspread his soul in meditation with the sad remembrance of them, then in prayer he melts the cloud, and dissolves his heart into soft showers of evangelical mourning, that the Christian sighs and groans, weeps and mourns, like a child that is beaten, though he sees the rod laid out of his heavenly Father's hand, and fears no wrath from him for them.[53]

VII. THE PURITANS' PRACTICE OF PRAYER

It makes no difference whether people live in the first century or the twentieth; the problem is the same. Cyprian, writing in the third century, expressed it well: 'When we stand praying . . . we ought to be watchful and earnest with our whole heart, intent on our prayers'. We Christians must be on our guard lest 'we have one thing in our heart and another in our voice'. Such prayers will never avail with God; they serve only to offend him.[54] Cognisant that a warning may not be sufficient, Puritan Divines filled volumes instructing Christians on such problems. Typically, in his *The Whole Armour of God*, Gouge gives these directions for obtaining 'inward reverence in prayer':

> That . . . we may feare God, and think of him reverently, we must both before prayer meditate on his glory and excellency: (for so shall we come with hearts raised up from the dunghill of this earth, to the glorious Throne of Heaven, . . .) and while we are in prayer, hold our hearts close with God, that they be not carried away with vain thoughts, and wandering imaginations: for our prayers are then but lip-labour.[55]

In addition to having an awareness of the majesty of God, the Christian is also directed to seek God himself and communion with him. Brooks, with his evangelical mysticism, reminds us that, although the Puritans often tremble at Sinai, they know what it is to be children of the new covenant and enjoy personal communion with God. 'In all your private retirements', he writes, 'take up in nothing below fellowship with God . . . nothing below a sweet and spiritual enjoyment of God'. Supplicants should 'press hard after real and sensible communion with God, . . . and . . . enjoy that inward and close fellowship with God . . it is sad when Christians return from their closets . . . without the least visible rays of divine glory upon them'.[56]

The Puritans liked to feel and apprehend the presence of God by sensibly perceiving it through the psycho-spiritual effect it had upon them. Religion without this was not true religion. Ideally they desired this state at all times, although they were conscious this was not likely to be.

One concept receiving a great deal of attention in Puritan writings is importunity, or fervency, in prayer, which was considered not only desirable but necessary. Christopher Love told his flock to observe 'that merely a state of friendship and reconciliation with God is not . . . sufficient'. No! 'There

must be an holy importunity, even in God's own friends'.[57] Therefore 'the people of God . . . must labour after this holy importunity in prayer, before they can have their prayers accepted'.[58] This concept of importunity is so allied to fervency that they can be viewed simultaneously. Preston argues that it is a 'qualification the Lord requireth, not so much because the very fervency . . . is respected, as because it puts the heart into an holy and spiritual disposition, whereby we may be fitted to receive the mercy, as before we were not'.[59]

Importunity includes fervency as well as persistence or perseverance. Scriptural examples of this persistent fervency noted by Love are Jacob wrestling with God and Elisha who prayed fervently for rain. For the Christian this means 'pray, and continue praying, and do not give over, till you find some good done upon your hearts, till you find sin weakened, and grace strengthened'.[60]

'We are said to be fervent,' Preston preaches, when we pray with 'all our strength, though we find many difficulties, and break through all impediments: *i.e.* much guiltiness, great corruptions, sundry discouragements, deadness of spirit, yea and the Lord himself backward to do for us; it may be to give a contrary answer . . .: a man prays for health, it may be his sickness increaseth upon him more: or prays to overcome such a lust or temptation, it may be it is doubled upon'. If we are really fervent, really importunate, we will 'outwrestle God in it', and 'will not give over, till we have got the blessing'.[61]

Brooks stresses the spiritual and psychological intensity involved by emphasising 'the heavenly fire, the holy fervency', contrasting it with 'feeble prayers' and 'cold prayers'. The latter are 'as birds without wings; . . . they fly not up to the heaven'.[62]

On the other hand, he notices in the Bible 'all those unusual phrases of crying, wrestling, and striving with God', concluding that men need such a prayer 'as sets the whole man on work, as sets all the faculties of the soul, and all the graces of the soul, at work. Those who would succeed in prayer must be like Epaphras, 'always labouring fervently for you in prayer' (Col. 4:12).

> The Greek word ἀγωνιζόμενος . . . signifies to strive or wrestle . . .; it notes the vehemency and fervour of Epaphras [in] prayers for the Colossians. Look, as the wrestlers do . . . strain every joint in their bodies, that they may be victorious; so Epaphras did . . . strain every joint of his soul, — if I may so speak, — that he might be victorious with God upon the Colossians' account. So, when Jacob was with God, . . . He wrestles and weeps . . .; he tugs hard with God, he holds his hold, and he will not let God go, till as a prince he had prevailed with him . . . He that would gain victory over God in private prayer, must strain every string of his heart; he must in beseeching God, besiege him, and so get the better of him; . . . Those that would be masters . . . must . . . press God so far as to put him to an holy blush, as I may say with reverence: they must with an holy impudence . . . make God ashamed to look them in the face, if he should deny the importunity of their souls.[63]

VII. THE SCRIPTURAL NATURE OF THE PURITANS' THEOLOGY OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

An examination of prayer can lead into many other avenues of Puritan thought and experience that are intrinsic to any Christian theology of the spiritual life; *e.g.* regeneration, the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts,

meditation, and mysticism. Although these categories, and others, are common to those within the Christian community, they are developed and emphasised in ways that are unique to the various movements within the Faith. In examining the Puritans' idea of prayer, several features of their spirituality in general become clear.

Most obvious is the distinctly scriptural nature of their *theologia spiritualis*. The Bible gives Puritans complete guidance regarding all aspects of prayer: such as the types of prayer, the frequency, the use of the voice, and posture and gestures. Although demanding strict adherence to the details found in the Bible, the Puritans were not settling for the mere letter of obedience. Rather, the details are aids to obtaining the full spiritual experience found in the New Testament church. The fact that such close attention is paid to these details of prayer is a reflection of the Puritans' deep inward desire to respond obediently to the revealed will of God.

Most people in the twentieth century draw back from making petition primary; it seems to them that if they take this step prayer will become people-centred, if not self-centred. Friedrich Heiler reflects this outlook: 'The aim of all petition is . . . enhancement of one's own deepest needs. It is partly negative when it aims at deliverance from an evil . . .; it is partly positive when it has in view the granting of possessions and advantages'.[64] However, as we have seen, by using the Lord's Prayer as their model, the Puritans are enabled to make petition primary and escape the self-centred nature of the prayers of many, while lifting the purpose of prayer to a higher plateau than that enjoyed by the mystic, whose desire for experience can in itself be self-gratifying.

The experiential foundation of Christian prayer is the filial relationship expressed in 'Our Father' and made real by the indwelling Holy Spirit. But the objective of prayer is God's glory and the advancement of his kingdom. By maintaining this, the Puritans were able to develop a spirituality that is, in its ideal state, seeking no personal advantage. Even communion with God is subordinate to these higher ends.

An additional strength of the Puritans is that they give a large place to intercession. Heiler observes that the Apostle 'Paul put intercessory prayer at the very centre of the devotional life of the Christian. He himself . . . prays unceasingly for the . . . spiritual growth of his churches and exhorts them unceasingly to pray for themselves and for their brethren'.[65] Parishioners are taught by pastors like William Gouge to 'Pray for the Citie, Towne, or Parish where we live', and 'by name the minister', as well as for their families and the church worldwide.[66]

The Puritans made a major contribution in the development of a unique Evangelical Protestant piety. 'This is not to belittle what had gone before. Of religious experience as of Biblical study, there had been much', Geoffrey F. Nuttall acknowledges. 'But medieval religious experience had necessarily been coloured by the ecclesiastical medium'.[67] What the Puritans accept from the past is what they find sanctioned by Scripture. They do not pray because they have learned from Catholics to pray, but because they have been enjoined by Scripture to do so. As Protestants they redefine prayer as petition, reject prayer to Saints and angels, prefer vocal to mental prayer, dispense with canonical hours and adopt morning and evening prayer, and

fast on occasions warranted by Scripture and not the church calendar. Similarities and cross-fertilisation are there, yes. Proper perspective, however, recognises that Roman Catholics and Puritans have common roots, the Scripture and the Early Church, and hence there are corresponding points. For the Puritans the question regarding spiritual things is, 'Does it spring from the roots, or, has it been engrafted in?' The latter must be rejected.

Another conspicuous aspect of Puritan spirituality is the experiential emphasis. 'From the days of the apostles we find running through the history of the Church what we might call an experiential tradition'. And, Stoeffler continues, in seventeenth-century Protestantism this 'experiential line' found expression primarily in English Puritanism and Continental Pietism.[68] The highly experiential nature of Puritan spirituality becomes apparent while viewing them at prayer and illuminates Downame's statement that it is 'feeling and practice, in which the power of godliness chiefly consisteth'.[69] There are varieties of experience, but all are manifestations of the Holy Spirit according to the norms revealed in the New Testament.

Characteristic of the Puritans' spirituality is the immediate encounter, which Nuttall calls 'Puritan mysticism',[70] which takes place primarily in prayer. Although this may be expressed and experienced in a more extreme fashion by those on the left wing of the movement, it permeates the whole. The use of affectionate romantic language by the conservative Heywood is typical when describing the encounter:

> Oh when God finds a soul alone by itself, having set itself purposely to meet him, then he reveals his love, unveils his face, . . . distributes doles of love and grace, kisses it with the kisses of his mouth, and sends it not away empty, but full of grace and peace . . . No creature of earth is privy to the secret groans or sweetest solace of a retired Saint.[71]

Such moments with God are not only for the few who give themselves up to a monastic life for the pursuit of God. No, they are for carpenters and tinkers, parish priests and ploughboys, for servants and masters; Puritanism's spirituality is for the common person. But it is not a common spirituality. Heiler suggests that one characteristic of the 'great saints' is that prayer 'is not limited to certain occasions', it 'accompanies all thought and action'; life becomes 'a *life of prayer*, a continuous hourly and daily intercourse with God'.[72] Lay people under the ministry of Thomas Horton are similarly reminded of their high calling:

> Beloved, the *Life of our Life* consists in our *communion with God,* which we maintain not only by the *set performances,* of prayer, *morning and evening,* . . . But we maintain this communion more especially by a *daily,* and *hourly,* and *frequent, and constant lifting up of our hearts to God,* . . . and so follow him, as that we will not let him go from us, or be one *moment out of our sights.* This is that, I say, which *we may do,* and this is that which we ought to do *upon all occasions.*[73]

VIII. THE PURITANS' SUCCESS AND EXAMPLE

The historian G. S. S. Yule, after noting the biblical nature of Puritan theology, spirituality, and philosophy of life, finds that its 'effect on the laity

was profound'.[74] Yule has displayed the evidence for this in a revealing study showing the intensity of the piety of the Puritan members of the Long Parliament. The correspondence of Roger Hill, M.P., from Bridgport, with his daughter Abigail, may be considered typical. He exhorts her, 'A prize is now put into your hands; improve it to the utmost, . . . give all diligence now to make sure of the Lord Jesus Christ . . . Seek the Lord daily as in private and public'. Writing to her son, Nad, Lady Harley, wife of Sir Robert Harley, says, 'Let nothing hinder you from performing constant private duties of praying and reading. Experimentally I may say that private prayer is one of the best means to keep the heart close to God. O, it is a sweet thing to pour out our hearts to God as a friend.'[75]

Although far removed sociologically and economically from the members of Parliament, the poor are also affected by Puritan piety. Baxter relates that in his parish 'some of the poor men . . . were so able in Prayer, that very few ministers did match them, in order and fulness, and apt Expressions, and holy oratory, with fervency; abundance of them were able to pray very laudably with their families, or with others'.[76] Coupled with ability in prayer, Baxter quickly adds, was an exemplary life of practical and spiritual Christianity.

Undoubtedly one paramount factor in enabling men such as Baxter to minister so effectively is that they are not trying to lead their people where they have not been themselves. The eighteenth-century non-conformist, John Taylor, eulogises his spiritual forefathers, but does not exaggerate, saying:

> Particularly, they were men of great devotion and eminent abilities in *prayer*, uttered, as God enabled them, from the abundance of their hearts and affections; men of divine eloquence in pleading at the throne of grace; raising and melting the affections of their hearers, and being happily instrumental in the transfusing into their souls the same spirit and heavenly gift. And this was the ground of all their other qualifications; they were excellent men, because excellent, instant and fervent in prayer.[77]

In his work on the history of pastoral care, our contemporary John T. McNeill shows an appreciation of the Puritans and tells us that their contributions 'to the cure of souls is abundant and varied, and many of the Puritan ministers set an example of devotion in the personal ministry'. He also concludes that, so far as pastoral theology is concerned, 'by precept and example the English Puritans placed all later English-speaking Protestantism in debt to them, and they have still much to teach us in this field'.[78] This study has shown that we must concur with McNeill.

The Puritan concept and practice of prayer typifies their causistry. The discussion is ample, scriptural, practical, experiential, balanced, mystical yet realistic. Men and women are brought into contact with their Creator, and reminded of their responsibility while encouraged to trust fully in their heavenly Father. This is the New Testament way.

PART FOUR

The Challenge to Pray

18

Prayer and the Training of Christian Leadership

RUSSELL SHEDD

Every Christian organisation vitally concerned to further God's cause must recognise the importance prayer should have in the preparation of leaders. The purpose of this study is to present the nature of spiritual leadership and the centrality of prayer in the training of leaders who will exercise any influential role in service for God.

J. Allen Thompson described his reaction to elevation to the directorship of his mission. 'That day I knelt in dedication . . . accepting God's appointment. I wept in desperation, a prayer of committal. Lord, you know my total inability for this task. You know I cannot emulate my godly father. I turn to you, now. I have no other course. Make me your instrument.'[1] Here the responsibility of Christian leadership and prayer intertwine in a vital way.[2] A humble disposition to lean rather than lead, a willingness nevertheless to become an institutional director, gladly submitting under the leadership of the church's supreme Head, is the heart of the matter. Such must be the controlling vision of all who wish to prepare a cadre of men and women for vital decision-making.

Surprisingly, there is a paucity of direct teaching about management skills or organisational structures in the New Testament. Consider the qualifications of the first missionary team sent out in Acts. Both Barnabas and Saul were highly respected leaders, recognised by the Antioch church and commissioned by the Holy Spirit. Although it would undoubtedly be false to imagine specific steps that those pioneers took to acquire expertise in leadership, yet they met the four conditions that Chester I. Barnard sets out as necessary for the authority of leadership to be effective: 1) Understand the communication expressed by the director(s). 2) Make decisions that are consistent with the purpose of the organisation. 3) Lead in a way compatible with personal interest. 4) Be able to comply with the orders given.[3]

More than fulfilling job descriptions and following management techniques, those key men were dedicated, wise, and sensitive to God's directions. Their decisions, characteristically, were made in the crucible of the presence of God. Prayer meant much more than ritual endorsement: rather it served as a vital link in the chain of command. They were sensitive to divine orders which they implemented with faithful submission. But when leaders fail, the tragedy reflects on God, for the cause is his. Multiple casualties result, forming a kind of spiritual ripple effect, and reach out to the extremities of the radius of the leader's influence.

Modern business practices have confirmed for the world the importance of following newly discovered laws of efficient management.[4] The consequences of making the right decisions are success, increased production, fame, and power. In the realm of the Spirit, such 'natural law' may well reveal the orderliness of God's person, but obscure the significance of prayer and trust. Good management operates mechanically, demonstrating discernible laws of cause and effect. But prayer acts in a distinct dimension, the invisible world where God chalks up credits and debits often undetectable by any human evaluation. 'One of the gravest perils which besets the ministry is a restless scattering of energies over an amazing multiplicity of interests, which leaves no margin, time, and strength for receptive and absorbing communion with God.'[5] Leadership involves the exercise of spiritual power. Prayer is God's ordered means of channelling his power (Mk. 11:23,24; Jn. 14:12–14; 16:13,24). As no spiritual progress or victory can be expected without God's intervention, it behooves all who wish to serve him to learn the secret of receiving copious evidences of his power through intercession. Said the saintly Robert Hall, 'The prayer of faith is the only power in the universe to which the great Jehovah yields. Prayer is the sovereign remedy.'[6]

I. QUALIFICATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN LEADER

1. It would be easy to compile a long list of desirable qualities a Christian leader should possess, but the foremost prerequisite of anyone in authority is godliness. Without a heart that cleaves to God and seeks his glory as its highest ambition the leader will fall into the trap of prayerlessness and egocentricity. The person who has a very limited experience in getting things from God and a lukewarm heart for God will fail in the central aim which must undergird all service for God. 'The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart' (1 Sam. 13:14) is still true in this day of grace. Such was Count Zinzendorf, who confided, 'I have only one passion: it is He, He alone.'[7] On the other hand, James reminds us that a wrong kind of praying will not be attended. The picture he paints describes the church as God's unfaithful wife. An 'adulteress' (Jas. 4:4) symbolises anyone who begs from God the conditions to commit adultery with the world.[8] While godliness alone is not necessarily sufficient to assure a high level of leadership, its omission certifies that the exercise of leadership will not be harmonious with God's will.

A leader who exercises authority makes decisions that affect the group he or she leads. For example, the pastor chooses goals and the means he believes will reach them. His vision and teaching gain approval by the congregation that chooses to follow him. When a pastor selects themes to preach on or subjects to converse about, his parishioners learn what their leader deems is essential in the Christian life. Clearly the pastoral leader not only proclaims his understanding of the message but also models it (cf. Phil. 3:17). The vital question is, are his choices and values rooted in Scripture while he humbly waits on God in prayer?

Paul underscores the role of leadership in his teaching on the gifts God gives the church (Eph. 4:11–12). Apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teaching pastors are to concentrate primarily in preparation (*katartismon*) of saints. Two kinds of service within the body of Christ are suggested by this

term: (a) restoring those who fail (cf. repairing nets in Mt. 4:21), as in the case of the Galatians, where Paul limited the right to restore others to 'spiritual', *i.e.* godly, men;[9] (b) training people in the church for ministry (*diakonia*).

If the privilege of directing is pressed upon leaders who are not characterised by prayer, the body will suffer spiritual anaemia. The stumbling members will not be restored (Gal. 6:1,2). The church will neither reach its divine destiny, nor arrive 'at the unity of the faith' and the knowledge of the Son of God (Eph. 4:13). The same hindrances to prayer are the barriers to a holy life.[10] Logically, a church cannot be expected to surpass its leader in spiritual power and godliness, though it may.

2. The second important credential of the leader is a vision that reacts in a critical and challenging way to the status quo. Without a director who lifts his eyes beyond the urgent concerns of the moment, any organisation will soon show the marks of death and decay. Such was Jesus' evaluation of those who 'have eyes . . . but fail to see . . . have ears but fail to hear' (Mk. 8:18). Matthew relates Christ's last orders to his adoring followers: 'Teaching them [the disciples you make] to obey everything I have commanded you' (Mt. 28:19,20). How would the church Jesus envisioned differ from the religious communities of the Pharisees and scribes? His scathing rebuke of these contemporary Jewish leaders grew out of his observation that they were abysmally unqualified to set the pace for God's people: (a) They do not practice what they preach (Mt. 23:3). (b) They demand that others carry burdens they will not raise a finger to bear (v.4). (c) They exalt themselves instead of choosing the path of self-abasement (Mt. 23:12).

3. The Christian leader must be tested and proven. Paul warns: 'He [the overseer] must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil' (1 Tim. 3:6). The privilege of teaching others should be consequent to proven faithfulness and capacity (2 Tim. 2:2). The Bible furnishes numerous examples. Oustanding among them are Moses and Paul who were not given the responsibility of governing others until they had spent long years in the school of faith, learning to know God: Moses in the back side of the desert and Paul in the Arabian wilderness and in ten years of obscure ministry before reappearing in the limelight (Gal. 1:17; Acts 9:30; 11:25). So too Christian leaders must face the crucible of human inter-relationships, if they are to earn the privilege of wielding authority.

As an example of the way one denomination serving in Mexico confirms those who claim they have heard the call to Christian service, several steps are required to test the legitimacy of their vocation. a) For one year they are to witness in the streets, distributing tracts and evangelising the lost. b) Once successfully beyond that hurdle, they are encouraged to establish a regular preaching point. c) The third step requires working humbly under the pastor of a local church. d) If, after a year, the pastor willingly recommends the candidate's matriculation, he is admitted to a pastors' training course. e) After successful completion of the required course of study, questions must be correctly answered during a three-day interrogation in preparation for ordination. f) If the examining pastors think he is chosen of God to lead, he will be ordained to the gospel ministry.

4. Contrary to the general image of leadership, the person whom God calls to administer his business must be both teachable and willing to serve.

Foundational to the overseer's good management of the home and worthy care (*epimelesetai*) of the church of God (1 Tim. 3:5) is the stated requirement that he be 'able to teach'. The epitome of wisdom can be found in the correct blend between conviction and openness. Although reluctant to accept God's appointment, Moses served in faithful obedience. Such humble reluctance to take the awesome responsibility over the lives of others was not uncommon in outstanding biblical leaders.

To become a vessel equipped for the Master's use demands, first of all, the surrender of the will. Certain anonymous Macedonians who 'gave themselves first to the Lord' (2 Cor. 8:5) acted in this way. Was Epaphroditus of Philippi one of these (Phil. 2:25–30)? Paul urged the church to 'honour men like him' (Phil 2:29).

Since power corrupts so frequently and thoroughly, the leader's sole escape from the devil's snare (1 Tim. 3:6) should be sought by walking in the sanctifying path of communion with God. From expression to God, to impression by God, to expression to fellow men,[11] is the essentially biblical way to acquire authority, spirituality, and a sacrificial spirit necessary to Christian leadership.[12] The one who seeks to fill the role of a steward must first of all acknowledge total personal paralysis in the spiritual realm, apart from his Lord (Jn. 15:5).[13] To believe that one can do anything apart from divine grace is to deny the Father's glory in the Son (Jn. 14:13) and is counter-productive to the kind of fruit the true vine produces (Jn. 15).

Genuine prayer cannot regularly bypass confession of sin which will in turn humble a leader before God and himself. If he omits prayer and shuns the mirror of God's Word, he will become increasingly enamoured of his importance, a path which leads to insensitivity to spiritual reality. He will be responsible for destructive changes in the organisation or church. Failure to operate according to God's law results in following fallen human law (1 Cor. 3:3).[14] Such a spiritual disaster occurred in Corinth. Anonymous leaders who commended themselves (2 Cor. 10:11) were able to rise to preeminence, but they divided the church into four parts. Their ambition motivated their fleshly practice of peddling God's word insincerely (2 Cor. 2:17). No doubt these people shunned real prayer. They led in the flesh and set their sights on its unspiritual goals (1 Cor. 3:3).

5. He who aspires to the responsibility of an overseer needs to ascertain if he can lay claim to the credentials of a leader like Stephen, 'a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit' (Acts 6:5). True faith breeds confidence in leader and follower alike. Endued with a calm assurance of the Guide who has travelled the road before, he knows the vicissitudes of life are not assailing him by chance. Rather, they are indicators of divine testing (1 Pet. 1:7), God's school of wisdom. James suggests that when faith is tested, the child of God becomes aware of his or her deficiency in wisdom (Jas. 1:5). Proven faith encourages prayer with assurance that God will generously supply what is lacking (1 Pet. 1:3–6). 'The faith that believes that God will do what you ask is not born in a hurry, it is not born in the dust of the street and the noise of the crowd. Its birthplace is in the secret place, and time, the open Word and a reverent heart are necessary to its growth. Into that heart will come a simple strong faith that the thing it is led to ask shall be accomplished'.[15] Our Lord declared, 'Everything is possible for him who believes' (Mk. 9:23).

Such trust in God inspires followers to confide in their leader. His 'style'

will have been forged in the interaction with a Father who disciplines and confirms his child through testing and personal intercommunion. No feats of mental gymnastics, no self-indoctrination in the art of positive thinking, no merely subjective, worked-up state, no desperate desire playing on a strong imagination will create this faith.[16] Quite to the contrary, he 'knows whom he has believed' (2 Tim. 1:12), and is therefore persuaded that the decisions he makes are made in partnership with the Lord of the kingdom. For Paul, the Christian leader is a co-labourer with God (1 Cor. 3:9), especially through his intercession.[17] In Acts, the fulness of the Holy Spirit is essential to all who take responsibility for God's people. Peter, Stephen, Barnabas, and Paul are so described. Luke wants his readers to understand that submission to the Spirit's control is important in the life of a leader. When the members of the persecuted church lifted their voices with one accord (Acts 4:24), the answer to their prayer resulted in a 'filling' of the Holy Spirit and increased courage. They were enabled to stand fearlessly against their enemies with their testimony undeterred.

Faith exercised in prayer is the one sure path to knowing God's will.[18] This is superbly illustrated by Paul during his voyage to Rome. The Apostle demonstrates the calibre of leadership so necessary in men of God.[19] His recognised trustworthiness in Sidon (Acts 27:3) and his voice of authority as he addresses captain and centurion alike (Acts 27:10) are choice examples. Concern for others, despite his circumstances, motivates the Apostle to admonish the ship's authorities concerning future damage to life and property which their decision to attempt to reach Phoenix would entail (Acts 27:9f.). Still later Paul encourages friend and foe alike, after the storm at sea had all but destroyed any hope of salvation (Acts 27:22). Intimate communion with the Lord of creation made exercise of decisive leadership natural.

6. A further credential of proven value in the leader's qualifications is a cooperative spirit. 'Spiritual leadership serves others.'[20] Inate self-sufficiency that looks with disdain on harmonious interdependence will spell failure in the work of God.[21] In a clock many wheels and gears may run counter to each other, turning at widely differing speeds, yet each contributes to the accurate measure of time. Just so the leader's role exists in part to ensure effective unity and cooperation.[22] Prayer is the Lord's ordained means to create cooperative interrelationships. The leader, like a winning coach, must be the catalyst that unites members of the body. But prayer remains the primary means by which Christian *koinonia* can be achieved.

7. A final qualification that a Christian leader must not fail to acquire is experience in spiritual warfare. How can the 'strong man' be bound, his hell-bound captives freed (cf. 2 Tim. 2:26; Is. 61:1; Eph. 4:8–10) and his house spoiled, unless the leader is filled with a divine boldness (cf. Mt. 12:28,29; Mk. 3:27: Lk. 11:21,22)? Just as in physical warfare an officer's courage and strategy can spell the difference between victory and defeat, so it is in the spiritual realm. Paul assures us that, crucial to any victorious engagement with the devil and his infernal forces, we must put on the whole armour of God. This God-given panoply, comprised of the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of the faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, can only be worn and effectively employed through prayer (Eph. 6:13–18). Such is the divine plan and provision to 'stand against the devil's schemes' (Eph. 6:11).[23]

A heart for God, a vision that will not merely be content to continue traditional actions and practices, a person proven in trying human circumstances and divine testing, one who is teachable, full of faith and the Spirit, who strives for excellence while battling Satan through confidence in God: such are the characteristics of the person who can confidently be elevated to a position of leadership. When these qualities are found in those God chooses, it is astounding to contemplate 'the almost limitless possibilities of one life' (cf. Rom. 14:7).[24] Such a person will follow in the path of men like William Carey who adopted this motto: 'Attempt great things for God. Expect great things from God.'[25] Well within a biblical orientation came the answer to a question put to a Chinese Christian: 'Where do you get your leaders?' 'From the prayer meeting.'[26]

II. PRAYER, THE GOD-ORDAINED MEANS OF RAISING UP LEADERS

A. Selecting and Raising Up Gifted People

Men and women after God's own heart, who will direct his affairs on earth in keeping with his laws, rise to the top in answer to prayer. Did God not select and groom Moses to lead Israel out of slavery in answer to the cries of the Lord's tormented people? Was not Samuel's birth and life a response to the pleading of Hannah's inaudibly whispered prayer (1 Sam. 1:13)?[27] 'Elijah, without his praying would have neither record nor place in the divine legation: his life insipid, cowardly, its energy, defiance and fire gone.'[28] Nehemiah's role in the restoration of the walls of Jerusalem and the revival of revealed religion among the returned Jewish exiles was a response to his own prayer: 'I mourned and fasted and prayed' (Neh. 1:4). We may assume that 'the people worked with all their heart' because Nehemiah prayed as he worked and worked as he prayed (Neh. 4:4–6).[29] Space will not permit additional consideration of well-known biblical leaders whose lives were immersed in prayer or men of Augustine's calibre who owe to faith-filled prayer their conversion and evangelical prominence.[30] Nevertheless, we need to be reminded constantly that prayer is God's means of raising up leaders who otherwise would never have come to prominence.

No illustration, however, is so constraining as our Lord's own example. After an entire night spent in prayer, he chose from numerous followers disciples 'whom he also designated apostles' (Lk. 6:13). This latter designation significantly emphasises the authority and responsibility they would exercise in the future. 'You did not choose me', he told them, 'but I chose you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name' (Jn. 15:16). The fruit represents people who would at a later date be incorporated into the Messianic Community. In that precise context Jesus emphasised the importance of asking the Father in his name as the key to producing and maintaining fruit.

As Jesus looked forward to the expanding boundaries of the world mission he foresaw the paucity of effective leaders. The solution he mandated was, and continues to be, prayer. 'Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field' (Lk. 10:2; Mt. 9:37f.). Jesus made prayer the key to gathering the unharvested fruit. The biblical requirement remains: effective leaders arise in answer to believing prayer.

Art Wiens, for long years a missionary in central Italy, and Jim Elliott, well-known Auca Indian martyr, formed a group of Wheaton College students to pray for missions. There were one thousand five hundred students on campus in 1947. Why not ask God to send one thousand of them to the mission field? Confidently they prayed. Art besought God for every student, following the student directory. Today Wiens' tattered prayer diary, kept since college days, includes 535 missionaries scattered throughout the world, from that period, whom Art prays for regularly by name! Only the dedicated prayer effort of those years can explain the numbers of effective workers around the world today from Wheaton College, in that important period.[31] When the basic problem in a church ministry or project is anaemic leadership, the Bible offers a foolproof solution. Beseech the sovereign Lord to grace his church with 'gifts' (Eph. 4:8,11), men and women who will serve according to the pattern of their Master.

B. Prayer in the Preparation of Leaders

Potential leaders often lie undetected and unchallenged in the community for lack of training and experience. Who but Jesus would have perceived the possibilities for pioneering in world missions in those Galilean fishermen? From powerless peasants to world-class leaders required training in how to pray. Yet as the director of a large missionary society writes, 'leadership development is essential to church development. Growing churches must have leaders of sufficient quality and quantity or growth will slow [down] and sometimes stop'.[32] The training consisted in verbal teaching and practical examples. Jesus' teaching on prayer admonished the disciples to distance themselves from the hypocrites who pray in synagogues and on street corners only to be seen (Mt. 6:5). Power in prayer can only be expected where a leader is humble enough to maintain his deep, intimate relationship with God a secret.

Moreover, true prayer excludes thoughtless babbling. Meaningless repetition neither impresses God nor commends itself to the accompanying hearers (Mt. 6:7). Petitions that gain God's ear put the sanctity of God's name in first place and envision the priority of the King's rule. That his will be performed must be seen as all that really matters (Mt. 6:9,10). Furthermore, Jesus instructed his disciples to request the true bread that does not perish but 'endures to eternal life' for their daily spiritual sustenance (Jn. 6:27).[33] No leader can serve very effectively as long as he harbours resentments or carries a burden of guilt. In prayer he may examine the soil of his soul for any 'bitter root' so that by its extraction trouble may be avoided (Heb. 12:15). He is freed to accept God's forgiveness in the same measure in which he can ascertain that he has been reconciled to every offending or offended brother (cf. Mt. 5:24; 18:21–35).[34] Finally, the struggle against Satan and temptation can be won only by believing prayer. Therefore Jesus taught his disciples to become conscious of their spiritual frailty. They are instructed to 'watch and pray so that [they] will not fall into temptation' (Mt. 26:41; Mk. 14:38). Wrestling against the evil one, Jesus did not segregate his disciples into a fortress; rather they were sent into the world with the singularly effective weapon of prayer.

The Lord's Prayer, while given indiscriminately to all his followers, has a special application to leaders. According to Luke, Jesus gave this exemplary

prayer to his immediate followers, who became conscious of their need for schooling in the spiritual art of praying while observing their Master pray (Lk. 11:1).

By the parable of the Friend at Midnight (Lk. 11:5–10), Jesus instructed his disciples that without asking they would have nothing to offer famished 'guests'. Whoever neglects intercession will have a bare spiritual cupboard unless he or she has the boldness to ask confidently. No matter how inconvenient the hour of need, God is ready to open the door and give lavishly to a son who knocks (Lk. 11:10).[35]

In addition to teaching the disciples how to pray, Jesus interceded for them (Jn. 17). John has preserved an example of his concern for his pupils. Some themes in this high priestly prayer may be mentioned. 1. The sovereignty and ownership prerogatives of the Father are shared by the Son (vv.2,10), a truth which assures that all who pray according to his will are partners in Jesus Christ's own intercession. 2. The glory of the Father and the Son has been given to the disciples (v.22). Jesus' petition for his disciples is an extension of the prayer for his own glorification.[36] 3. Both the name and the teaching of the Father have been ministered to the disciples by the Son (vv.6,8,14,25,26). 4. The successful communication of the knowledge of God and of the Son (vv.3,25,26), the former being the source of his life and work (vv.7,8), has been completed. This list serves to remind all people of prayer that where a firm foundation of truth is missing, prayer is futile. Through the Lord's prayer of consecration (vv.18,20,21) they are transformed from followers (disciples) to leaders (apostles). This does not mean that they will now act independently in their mission in the world, for the ascended Lord will be interceding for them (vv.11–12. Heb. 7:25).[37] The petitions he makes for them and for future leaders are, briefly (vv.9,20), that the Father may keep them (v.11), that they may be one (v.21), that they may have the full measure of Christ's joy (v.13), that they may be sanctified in the truth (vv.17,19), that their commissioning to serve the world may not differ from Christ's mission (v.18), that the life of Jesus may be lived out in them (v.23) so that they may be united as are the members of the Trinity and in the future arrive at the place where Christ is (v.24) to see the glory that belongs to the Son.

Throughout this prayer the priorities of God's glory, and a personal knowledge of God (including his name and word), become crystal clear. The evidence of the answer to Jesus' prayer in the disciples' lives should be holiness and harmonious unity. The apostles who would direct the expansion of the Palestinian church of Jesus Christ into a hostile Jewish, then pagan Gentile world, would have to be convinced of the over-riding importance of each element in this prayer. They, like Jesus, would train a new generation of Christian leaders how to pray. The same needs continue today.

How soon would those young leaders, weaned from their Master's visible company, learn to pray 'not so as to wrest from God advantages' for themselves 'nor to escape from tribulations and difficulties, but to call down upon themselves and others those things which will glorify the name of Jesus Christ'?[38] Luke's inspired history in Acts describes the commitments of the disciples: 'They all joined together constantly in prayer' (1:14). During a prayer meeting the Holy Spirit visited them like a flood (Acts 2:1–2). The immediate effect could be observed by everyone. God through the Spirit allied himself with insignificant, fearful, and inconstant men and women.

Divine power flowed into them. Their bold words 'cut to the heart' (Acts 2:37) and the new covenant people of God were formed, committing themselves in turn to master the doctrine and to pray (2:42). Prayer, as Jesus had assured them, was the means whereby incompetent cowards (cf. Lk. 22:57ff.) would be changed into bold, wise leaders (Acts 4:13).

Instinctively, those first Christians needed no one to tell them (in the words of S. D. Gordon) that 'the great people of the earth are the people who pray . . . not . . . those who talk about prayer, not those who say they believe in prayer, nor yet those who explain about prayer; but I mean those who take time and pray'.[39] The Spirit became their tutor 'who helps us in our weakness' and overcomes our ignorance, guiding us in our questioning and interceding along with us with inarticulate groaning (Rm. 8:26,27). They counted on the truth Jesus taught them. Consequently, when the apostles realised that additional administrative duties would curtail their time for prayer and teaching, they delegated this encumbrance to the Seven so that they might devote themselves to prayer (mentioned first!) and to the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4). Prayer is God's ordained means of accomplishing his will in the world.[40] The Son is the heavenly enthroned Partner. God the Spirit is your indwelling prayer Partner.[41] Evidently those people who prayed for Peter's release from Herod's murderous designs did not expect him to be restored in such a spectacular way (Acts 12:3–17), but Peter himself faced the prospect of decapitation with tranquil equanimity. Why should he not calmly sleep? He had experienced the incapacity of Hades' gates to hold the dead when he knelt and prayed by the lifeless body of Dorcas. Though dead, she heard the inspired command to arise, and obeyed (Acts 9:40f.). The restoration to life is neither easier nor harder for God than to effect a release from prison and an escape from a king's assassination plot.

In Antioch the cell group of pastoral leadership supported their teaching ministry with prayer and fasting (Acts 13:2). The Holy Spirit took such an occasion to consecrate Barnabas and Saul for the first Gentile evangelistic mission in history (v.3). We may speculate that there was a continuing prayer cooperation of Simeon (Niger), Lucius, and Manaen with former colleagues, the newly appointed missionaries. Thus it occurred too that William Carey's sister, almost totally paralysed for fifty-two years in London, petitioned God for her brother's ministry in India, hour after hour, day after day.[42] God, by means of prayer, offers us the privilege of investing our time and effort in his most important purposes for the world.[43] Although John Mark, the junior member of the team (Gr. *hypēretēs,* Acts 13:5) abandoned the mission, he surely observed the power displayed through Paul's prayers (cf. Acts 13:9–12). Some years later, this same John Mark would quote the Lord's words on prayer in his gospel: 'Have faith in God . . . I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, "Go, throw yourself into the sea" . . . it shall be done for him . . . Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours' (Mk. 11:23,24). From the lives of Jesus and Paul, Mark grasped the possibility of praying with authority and confidence.[44]

Paul urged the church in Thessalonica to 'pray continually' (5:17). To the Christians in Asia, he pleaded, 'And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests' (Eph. 6:18). He reveals his own practice, 'I constantly remember you in my prayers' (2 Tim. 1:13; 1 Th. 1:2). The phrases ring out: 'night and day praying exceedingly . . . praying at all seasons . . .

watch and pray always'. He exhorted the readers in Gentile communities to pray, all who would find in Paul their example, just as the great Apostle valued the prayers of his distant children in the faith: 'He [God] has delivered us . . . and he will deliver us . . . as you help us by your prayers' (2 Cor. 1:8–11).

There is small wonder that young men who lived in intimate fellowship with Paul and Jesus should also learn the urgency of intercession. But how deficient do today's public prayers usually sound to those who look up to their pastors for encouragement along the road to genuine prayer?[45]

It is easy to imagine what Paul would think of any contemporary over-emphasis on intellectual progress, often gained in theological seminaries at the expense of spiritual growth. Coleridge was right, 'An hour of solitude passed in sincere and earnest prayer, or the conflict with and conquest over a single passion or subtle bosom sin will teach us more of thought, and will more effectually awaken the faculty and form the habit of reflection than a year's study in the schools without them'.[46] How will the candidates for leadership in the church improve or even maintain the spiritual climate if they are not convinced of the importance of prayer? When Luther was asked on one occasion what his plans were for the following day, he answered, 'Work, work, from early until late. In fact, I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer'.[47] Who will challenge the customary apathy when pastor and professor keep silent? Will pastoral candidates learn of the essential role prayer has played in revival and missions? Will they begin their pastoral duties ignorant of Jeremiah Lanphier's weekly prayer group meeting in New York? It spread and intensified until 'all meeting places in the city were packed. Within months, 10,000 were gathering on the streets, and in two years, two million converts joined churches in America'.[48] Are seminarians learning of the Moravians' one hundred year prayer meeting and its impact on world evangelism?

Is it not surprising that so few schools, whose stated purpose is to prepare people for the ministry of the gospel, offer a single course on prayer? Only recently Pastor Davi Gomes, an outstanding Brazilian evangelist and nationally known leader, has begun to offer a course on prayer in two seminaries of Rio de Janeiro. The exception tests the rule. As long as teaching how to preach has ascendency over schooling in prayer, there is little hope for revival or any significant increase in the exercise of divine power. 'Whether we like it or not, asking is the rule of the kingdom.'[49] Jesus left no clarion call for his followers to study, but he did declare 'that men ought always to pray and not to faint' (Lk. 18:1 KJV). And when there is a 'praying pulpit it will beget praying pews'.[50] Very few today who are set apart for the ministry of the gospel have learned what Luther was convinced of: that, 'As it is the business of the tailors to make clothes and cobblers to mend shoes, so it is the business of Christians to pray'.[51] But effectual fervent prayer requires intimacy with God: and intimacy requires development. This intimacy becomes not a duty but a privilege, the fellowship of the saint who returns to communion as naturally 'as a bird to its nest'.[52] From where will the inexperienced trainee gain confidence to draw near to the throne of grace to receive mercy and grace (Heb. 4:16),[53] if he has never known anyone who could say as did Adoniram Judson, 'I never prayed sincerely and earnestly for anything but it came at some time — no matter how distant a day, somehow,

in some shape, probably the last I would have devised, it came.'[54] How will a new generation of pastors and church leaders learn its unique dependence on prayer unless it has been taught? The prevailing materialism, the captivity to narrow denominationalism and clericalism, the tepid spiritual temperature of the church, the constant threat of theological error and iniquity abounding are enemies too powerful to restrain without prevailing prayer. Yet it is questionable if the graduates of theological schools around the globe are any better prepared to face their roaring foe than was Peter in Gethsemane and during Jesus' trial. Fledgling leaders learn what is expected of them from the practices of their local churches and Christian training schools. An unbalanced emphasis on numbers and buildings, while the prayer meeting is mortally sick, does not augur well for the future. If the average praying resembles a child who creeps up to ring the doorbell, then runs, not waiting for the occupant to appear or respond, it will be but a foolish and wearisome rite.

God's chosen leaders are to be people of prayer, whatever the human selection process may be. 'Men of prayer are needed especially in the position of church influence, honour and power.' Only then will the world cease scoffing at her impotence.[55] Men and women of prayer encourage others to pray; they are not so proud of their prayer power that they belittle the prayers of colleagues, church members, or Christians in general. Rather, they welcome them like the Spirit who intercedes in and through him who prays. Samuel Zwemer wrote, '[True] prayer is God the Holy Spirit talking to God the Father in the name of God the Son, and the believer's heart is the prayer room'.[56]

III. CONCLUSION

Prayer is the most important element of the Christian life, the nerve centre of our fellowship with Jesus, in conjunction with the serious reading of Scripture. P. T. Forsyth was right: 'All prayer is an answer to prayer.' But if prayer has declined to the level of mere 'lip-labour', disaster can be averted only if God in grace visits his church with a divinely instilled longing for reality. Henry Martyn movingly expressed such an ambition: 'After all, whatever God may appoint, prayer is the great thing. Oh, that I may be a man of prayer.'[57] As liberal theology has penetrated the church through its leadership training schools, so also positive change can follow if godly men and women who consciously live in the presence of God will make effectual prayer a priority. Only those who value prayer as Daniel did (Dan. 6:10) ought to become models for all who prepare for ministry (cf. 1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:17). Only those who have learned the biblical importance of prayer should exercise the prerogatives of leadership over God's people. Bonhoeffer said, 'The first condition which makes it possible for an individual to pray for the group is the intercession of all the others for him and his prayer'.[58] Paul, aware of his need, pleaded, 'Pray also for me' (Eph. 6:19). Jesus, the Supreme Leader, urged his intimate friends, 'Stay here and keep watch with me' (Mt. 26:38). Leaders, we conclude, will best fulfil their ministry if they pray much and succeed in mobilising those over whom they exercise authority to sustain them in prayer (cf. Exod. 17:10–12). An effective prayer life is not optional for any Christian; its omission is unthinkable for any leader.

19

Personal Experience of Prayer I

FELICITY B. HOUGHTON

If praying to God were a skill which we could master, it would be legitimate for us to say, 'We have learnt the required techniques, we now know how to pray'. But prayer is the way by which Christians express and develop the relationship that God himself has chosen to make with them as their Father through Jesus Christ. And so as a Christian, I would hesitate, on the one hand, to say to anybody who thought of prayer as an acquired skill, that I have learnt how to pray. On the other hand, I do not hesitate to confess with joy that God has made himself known to me personally through his Son, and given me the right to become his child. He has called me to have permanent fellowship with him. For this reason, I have been praying for as long as I have been a Christian. As God has brought me to know him better, little by little over the years he has taught me to pray with growing confidence, sincerity and humility. But as often as I pray, I still find I need to be taught how to pray.

As a learner, therefore, I would like to speak of some of the things I have been taught and which I know to be true in spite of my limited understanding of them. I shall refer first to the nature of prayer, then to the means God has provided for my learning to pray, and finally to some ways in which I desire to grow as one of God's praying children.

I. THE NATURE OF PRAYER

The mystery of prayer cannot be contained in the simple description: Prayer is talking with God. It is true that God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the person to whom we address our prayers, and it is true that talking is a good enough word to convey the idea of communication, whether it be silent in the mind or audible to our own ears. But who does the talking? Paradoxically, I have learnt from the Word and in my own experience that it is I who do it, and yet it is not I. It is Another. We pray, and yet when we do so truly, it is 'in the Holy Spirit' (Jude 20). He intercedes for us and, unlike Jesus' intercession which is carried on in heaven, the place from which the Holy Spirit intercedes is our own hearts. So he prays through us and our prayers are not our own, but his. Yet it is we who decide to pray, we who get down on our knees or adopt some other posture for prayer, we who open our

mouths or our hearts. The mystery is great and wonderful, and C. S. Lewis has caught its power and elusiveness in his poem, 'Prayer'.

> Master, they say that when I seem
> To be in speech with you,
> Since you make no replies, it's all a dream
> — One talker aping two.
>
> They are half right, but not as they
> Imagine; rather, I
> Seek in myself the things I meant to say,
> And lo! the wells are dry.
>
> Then, seeing me empty, you forsake
> The Listener's role, and through
> My dead lips breathe and into utterance wake
> The thoughts I never knew.
>
> And thus you neither need reply
> Nor can; thus, while we seem
> Two talking, thou art One forever, and I
> No dreamer, but thy dream.[1]

Prayer is therefore a mysterious co-operation between us and the Holy Spirit. He ensures that we pray by prompting us to do so, and by reassuring us from the Word that we are speaking to the living and almighty God, who encourages us to pray and knows what we need before we ask him (Mt. 6:8). Yet praying is our responsibility; it does not happen automatically. Two things prove that at any time we may grow slack in prayer or neglect it altogether: our own experience, and the commands to pray continually and to keep on praying always (1 Thess. 5:17; Eph. 6:18).

Someone commented to me that they thought Muslim people were far more devout than Christians. How many Christians in our country, said this friend, would pray with such regularity and fervour as they do with their set hours of prostrated prayer? I replied that Christians are often praying when those around them are wholly unaware of the communication that flows between them and God. The church is always at prayer - but only because of the unfailing grace of the Holy Spirit.

As God's children we find our set times of prayer to be very important at the beginning and end of each day, and we delight to lift our hearts to God every mealtime. We also know the great value of setting other times apart specially for prayer, alone or with others. And all this activity could be observed by the outsider. But this would never account for the volume of prayer traffic that streams between earth and heaven at all hours of the day and night. The ladder which rests on earth and has its top reaching to heaven is always crowded with climbers who are all attended to simultaneously by God and yet are given an individual and exclusive hearing of the most private sort. Praise be to the Holy Spirit who testifies with our spirit that we are God's children and moves us to cry, 'Father, my Father!' (Rom. 8:15,16; Gal. 4:6).

If Christians at prayer in the Holy Spirit may be compared to yachts with their sails spread and caught by the wind, surging forward through the waters, we could also say that praying is the essential expression of their life as God's

people, just as the essence of a ship is that it should live and move in the sea. There are of course many other activities that characterise Christian living, such as congregational worship, care of the needy, proclamation of the gospel and the study of the Bible. When someone becomes a Christian, we can expect that with good nurture and teaching, he or she will in the course of time become engaged in all of these and other activities as well, according to the distribution of God's gifts and calling in life. But as I understand it, prayer logically precedes all other expressions of Christian life.

Not all Christians are free to gather with fellow believers for worship, nor do all even have fellow believers with whom to gather if they could, in the place where they are. In some parts of the world many Christians are illiterate; in some parts, Bibles are very scarce among those who do read. Some Christians, lacking the encouragement and teaching they need from others, may be slow to speak of their faith among non-Christians, or to understand that the service God requires of them in the first place is their daily life at home and at work. But Christians everywhere call on their heavenly Father continually, for prayer is one of the infallible marks of the child of God. Where there is Christian prayer, there is life and faith, and where these are present all other needs will be supplied. In answer to prayer, opportunities for growth in all the exercises of Christian living will be provided.

Yet we should not conclude, solely on the basis of people telling us that they pray, that they have been born again into the family of God. Not all prayer is the fruit of a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ born of trust in him. In countries where the culture has been influenced by Christianity, it is not uncommon for people to pray to God not only before they are converted but also without becoming converted. Nevertheless, true prayer inevitably arises from the spirit that has been quickened by the Spirit of God and from the heart that has been reconciled to the Father and forgiven because of the sacrifice Christ made for our sins.

Though prayer is, as we have seen, a joint activity of our spirit and God's Spirit, and, thus understood, ceases to be a heavy burden or an unwelcome duty; and thought it is the natural and primary expression of our relationship to God as his children, it is not necessarily delightfully easy for us to pray. For to pray is to go on to the battlefield and enter into combat. The God to whom we pray is the Holy Trinity; the enemy who is outmatched by our prayers and who therefore works hard to hinder them is an evil threesome, the devil, the world and the flesh. For this reason we should not expect to find that praying always produces in us an effortless sense of pleasure. Prayer is spiritual work and spiritual warfare. Our resources for defeating the enemy are faith in the name of Jesus Christ, in the victory he has won by dying and rising again for us, and in the grace he gives us to persevere in supplication, with faith and hope, until we see the outworking of his victorious purposes in the people and situations concerning which we have been praying.

In times of temptation when our minds are tortured by the whispers of doubt, when our wills threaten to succumb to the suggestions of the devil and our feelings are thrown into turmoil, to pray at all we may think to be a fruitless effort. But let us not add to our misery by self-condemnation, requiring of ourselves great fervour or a given amount of time spent in prayer. The promise we have been given says, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the

Lord will be saved' (Rom. 10:13). What we must do is call, as Peter did as soon as he began to sink, 'Lord, save me!' (Mt. 14:30). As we do so, we shall discover that the Lord is near us and on our side. He is not against us, nor does he despise us for being tempted, for the same experience happened to him. He is for us and against our enemy. He will provide the way out not a moment too late; his help is always timely, always perfectly suited to our needs (Heb. 4:16). Then Psalm 124 will become our song of relief, of praise and of confidence for the future.

While it does not appear to be important for us to be able to make a clear-cut distinction between temptations which come to us more directly from the devil and the world, or from our own fallen nature, God's Word makes one thing absolutely clear: we must watch and pray, we must be alert and self-controlled. Unlike Eve, we are not to take up the tempter's suggestions; like Jesus, we are to resist the devil, placing our wills under the authority of God's written commands. We are not to desire or love or follow after all that this world offers us of seeming good which nevertheless does not have God's approval, and therefore cannot secure our true well–being. We are to refuse to satisfy the wishes and demands of our fallen nature, the 'flesh', and embrace and obey the desires and purposes of the Holy Spirit for our life as individuals and as God's holy community among the rest of humankind.

I find that my threefold enemy, if not able to dissuade me from praying, nevertheless works hard to discourage, distract and disturb me while I am at prayer. The discouragement arises from unbelief and a darkened understanding of what God is really like, the distraction from a cold heart and a wandering imagination, the disturbance from outward pressures of time, or noise, or busyness, or those around me, or inwardly from feelings about myself or others which are out of harmony with the love God has for me and for them.

From such experience I conclude that the efficacy of my praying does not depend on the feelings which accompany me as I pray. I would very much like to feel on every occasion the liberty and boldness and nearness to God that I in fact feel only sometimes. But I know that God hears me because I am his child and have been adopted by him into his family; I know that his Son, Jesus Christ, is my great high priest in heaven who always intercedes for me and gives me access to his Father; I know that in my weakness, discouraged, distracted and disturbed as I may be, nevertheless the Holy Spirit continues to dwell and work within me. He has taught me to take seriously the words of Jesus, who told his disciples that they should always pray and not give up (Luke 18:1).

It does not surprise me that our praying should be such a key target for attack. It must be so if the devil is the enemy of God, his Kingdom and his people such as the Word affirms him to be, and if prayer is the means by which Christ's victory over him is pressed home and established in actual situations where he has hitherto ruled in darkness and kept his captives bound in chains through his lies. Though the apostle Paul does not specify what weapons he has in mind when he refers to 'the weapons we fight with', he affirms that 'they have divine power to demolish strongholds'. Foremost among these weapons, I believe, are prayer to God and the proclamation of God's truth to men (2 Cor. 10:4,5).

Prayer, then, is the means by which our very union with Christ is

nourished, and by which Satan's strongholds are demolished. It is in prayer that God helps us to understand and embrace his purposes for us, as we meditate on the commands and promises of the Word. Plans and aspirations may be born in our minds as we pray thoughtfully, or be confirmed as God's will for us. As we obey the leading of God's Spirit received in prayer, and take concrete action as a result, our praying becomes fruitful.[2]

In Jesus we see a man for whom praying and doing, communion with the Father and action in the world of men, were inextricably entwined. He prayed in preparation for taking important decisions, such as choosing his twelve disciples, and when he was under the pressure of meeting many people's needs; when he was full of joy, or full of heaviness (Luke 6:12,13; 5:15,16; 10:21; Mark 14:33–35). For Jesus, communion with the Father was the hidden mountain spring which preceded his speaking and acting in public. Before he did things in view of men, we must suppose that he had been praying to his unseen Father privately, even as he taught his disciples to do (Mt. 6:6). But prayer was just as important for Jesus after public activity as before it, not only because he found renewal of strength in the Father's presence, but also because intercession to the Father was what ensured that his work was not in vain (Mk. 6:45,46; Jn. 17: 1–26).

We sometimes hear Christians speak of 'their prayer life', by which they mean their practice of prayer. We could speak of Jesus' 'prayer life' in the same way. But could it be that we conceive of our 'prayer life' and our 'life' as two different things? The danger certainly exists. And Jesus avoided it by seeing prayer as the fountain from which everything else that he did flowed, and by relating to the Father's will all that happened to him and around him. To be and to do, to plan and to suffer, without praying, or to pray in a way that is unrelated to our daily circumstances, would mean failing to follow our Master's pattern and hence abandoning our integrity as his disciples.

A few months ago I made a working visit to Tarija, a pleasant town in the south of Bolivia, set beside a wide river, the Guadalquivir, and within view of noble mountains. My colleague and I were lodged in a room behind a Brethren chapel. The room had two bookshelves, and most of the books were in English. One in particular caught my eye: *Prayer . . . Asking and Receiving*, by evangelist John R. Rice, D.D., published in 1942 by the Sword of the Lord Publishers in Wheaton, Illinois.

I began to read it then and, on leaving, asked permission to borrow it and take it with me. In God's providential goodness, the reading of this book has brought into sharp focus an essential aspect of the nature of prayer which had been blurred for me before. Now that I see it more clearly, I wonder how I could have been so foolish and so blind previously. And thanks to God, I can sense a difference in my praying.

Of course prayer is asking! And since God is God and hears our prayer, of course prayer is asking and receiving! It has become plain to me that we err in heart and mind when we say, like Ahaz (Is. 7:12), 'I will not ask', because, we argue, to adore and praise and thank the Lord is superior, and to ask for his blessings is inferior. But how do we glorify God? It is when we come before him as lowly supplicants and ask him to do for us and to give us great and unsearchable things such as only he can do and give.

In other words, he is glorified when in answer to our prayers he reveals his

power and goodness, his abundant provision and infinite grace. Behind my not asking lurks pride and unbelief, ignorance of his love and willingness to do 'immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine' (Eph. 3:20). Now my heart's desire is that I may learn to be a daily and constant asker, for myself, for others, for the church, for the world, and hence a joyful receiver, a shining witness to the living God who answers prayer.

II. MEANS GOD PROVIDES FOR TEACHING US TO PRAY

I move on now to consider some of the means through which I have been helped and instructed in what we rightly refer to as the school of prayer, starting with the praying community. I owe more than I can calculate to all those who have prayed for me, with me and alongside me since I was born. It is an amazing privilege to belong to this community of people who pray, the worldwide church of Jesus Christ, and to be able to acknowledge my debt to them. Not that they want their help to be recognised. I myself have sometimes been thanked for praying for somebody and have felt unworthy of their gratitude. What did I do? I tried to bring them and their needs before God in prayer; I tried to remember my promise to pray for them. But I see what I did as having no weight of its own and certainly no merit. Rather, my prayers for them I feel to be very small, fragile and inadequate. And yet God has been at work and they have experienced in some fresh way his salvation, and they know there is some connection between this fact and the prayers offered on their behalf by others.

The first branch of the praying community that I knew was my family. I am sure my parents prayed for me before I was born, and it was my mother who taught me to pray as a child, 'Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow' (Ps. 51:7) at the close of each day. For many years we had prayers together as a family as well as our private devotions. Whether we felt like it or not, it was part of our routine.

Over the years I have come to appreciate immensely the opportunity to pray with my fellow Christians on informal and formal occasions. I feel that a friend can do me no greater favour than to suggest that we pray together, whatever the time or place. Indeed, we can never be closer than when we pray with each other, daring to spread before God in one another's loving and respectful presence our cries and our praises, with confidence and expectancy. This is our goal, though we often fall far short of it.

I have learnt much from hearing my brothers and sisters in Christ pray, and from praying with them. I look back to the years during which I attended a Chilean Pentecostal Church as a time when, as never before or since, while adding my prayer to those of hundreds of hearts praying audibly all round me, I learnt to worship and to pour out my heart to God. Our pastor delighted to call the Lord Jesus by the names 'King of Glory', 'Lamb of God', and as he led us in a voice stirred to the depths by the wonder of faith and love, heaven opened and the Spirit came down among us.

The praying community, then, wherever it gathers — round a table at home or in a church building, in an office or a classroom, on the street or at a bus station, at the airport or in a railway compartment, in a hospital ward or on a

mountainside — is the context in which we learn to pray, where we grow in knowing God and where we share our most intimate cries to God with others who also call him their Father. Without it I would know little of prayer.

But I must say the same about the Word. Indeed, were it not for the Word I would have no knowledge of the God to whom I pray. For his self-revelation in the Bible and in Jesus Christ I thank him above all, but also for the privilege I had of learning to read and having a Bible of my own from an early age.

As I read and meditate on the Word morning by morning, I try to allow it to shape my prayers. I try to read it in a prayerful attitude, desiring that the Spirit should lead me to pray in a way that proves the Word has spoken to me, by my saying to God things I would not have said had I not just previously been filling my mind and heart with his Word.

I find this exercise stretches me in prayer as nothing else could. For the Word not only reveals to me the God to whom I pray, but also faces me with my own needs and the purposes God has for me. I am led to search my heart and to humble myself; I am led to see, shining far ahead of me, the goals for which 'Christ Jesus took hold of me' in order that I might take hold of them (Phil. 3:12–14). In the Word I also meet God's people at prayer: Abraham and Moses, David and Daniel, Job and Elijah, Peter and Paul, Stephen and John. I overhear Hannah jubilantly magnifying her Lord, and listen to Nehemiah praying in sorrow before the God of heaven. Their God is my God. From them I learn how he is to be approached and I discover how good he is to those who hope in him and seek him.

Some years ago, Dietrich Bonhoeffer's little book *Life Together*[3] suggested to me the idea of reading a psalm every morning in addition to my other reading. I have followed this practice for long enough now to have read and re-read the book of Psalms many times, and they have become a part of me. They teach me that I may and must pray to God where I am. If I am in the depths, then I must address him from out of those depths (Pss. 130,85,69). If my heart is joyful, I must summon my whole being to praise him (Ps. 103). In this way I believe we are being true to ourselves and to the apostle James' wise counsel, 'Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise' (Jas. 5:13). We are also practising the principle to which I referred earlier, that of binding our life, our present condition and our prayers indissolubly together. Blessed be God for his wisdom!

Another valuable aid to this union between earth and heaven is a small notebook which I keep beside me. At one end of it I have listed the days of the week separately and under each day have put the names of the people for whom I desire to pray regularly. At the other end I jot down my requests to God as they arise, requests for other people, for future happenings and for private needs. From time to time I spend some minutes writing in fresh requests.

I try to use both ends of my notebook each day and, whereas the weekly list remains the same, the current requests are gradually changing all the time, and I gratefully and happily put ticks beside answered prayers where appropriate. Quite often I find it a help to write down exactly, word for word, what it is that I am asking God to do, particularly in relation to my burdens, needs and sins. This private 'confessional' is a pathway of liberation.

Hymns, books of prayers, and books about prayer all contribute to my

praying. Among the hymns I love are Charles Wesley's 'Jesus, my strength, my hope, On Thee I cast my care, With humble confidence look up, And know Thou hear'st my prayer . . .'. At one time the *Preces Privatae*[4] of Bishop Lancelot Andrewes were my guide; at another, the prayers collected in a book called *The Valley of Vision*.[5] Basilea Schlink's *Praying our way through Life*[6] has been important for me, as also C. S. Lewis's *Letters to Malcolm*.[7]

In praying for God's work at a national level, either in the country where I live or in other places, I find printed prayer bulletins a valuable guide and, depending on the limitations of my time and my stewardship of it, I try to put them to good use. Concerning prayer letters in general, I find it best for me to read them carefully and then pray straight away, or at the first suitable opportunity, for the people and requests mentioned. Then I need not keep the letter, for I have prayed and God has heard. If, however, the letter is from someone for whom I pray regularly, naturally I keep it by me and refer to it as often as I want to.

Perhaps nothing gives edge to our prayers so well as our own commitment to the honouring of God's name, the coming of his kingdom and the doing of his will in our time and our world. Engaging ourselves in God's service is a sure way to get us on our knees to plead for others and ourselves. But it is of course also true that prayer itself is involvement in God's service of the most genuine sort. Whether we are praying for those spheres of God's work in which other Christians are actively involved, or for spheres where we ourselves are the workers, we come to recognise that the motivation to pray springs from our awareness of the need and of what is being done to meet it; likewise, the motivation to work or to give is stirred in us once we have committed ourselves to intercessory prayer. Whenever we pray for others we find things happening in ourselves. The scent of warfare brings new zest to our allegiance to Christ; we discover that God and his people are counting on our prayers and so we feel responsible; our geographical knowledge and sociological understanding takes leaps forward, and our spiritual horizons expand as never before. God has regarded us in our 'humble estate' (Lk. 1:48), as he did Mary, and picked us out personally to be fellow-workers with him in prayer. We are humbled and thrilled.

III. GROWING IN PRAYER

Truly God provides us with all the means we need in order to learn how to pray. Each one in its own time and way is wonderful, including the difficulties and failures and sorrows which goad us to prayers that are accompanied by tears and anguish. And yet we always need to go on growing in prayer. What does this mean? How do I desire to grow?

Does growing in prayer necessarily mean spending more time in prayer? Without a doubt it means becoming constant and faithful in making prayer a priority in our timetable, as opposed to being erratic and careless. And growth in our relationship with God means, too, becoming more sensitive to him when he prompts us to pray at unexpected times or for longer seasons, which may be accompanied by fasting.

To grow also means learning 'to pray until I pray', as someone put it in a

talk I heard many years ago and have not since forgotten. It is to persevere in the attitude and posture of prayer until (to borrow an idea from C. S. Lewis) we know it is the real I who is speaking, and that the You to whom we speak is the real God, not created by us, but our Creator, our Father. Someone wrote, 'There is no pure season of prayer without a struggle on the threshold.' Another writer comments on Christian, in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, knocking at the wicket gate: 'That is to say, he did not content himself with praying one or two seconds and then giving over, but he continued in prayer till the gatekeeper came.' I would like to become more persistent and steadfast and, indeed, insistent with God, like Jacob who said to the unnamed man who wrestled with him, 'I will not let you go unless you bless me' (Gen. 32:26).

Has the Lord Jesus not commanded us: 'Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you'? And to his command, did he not attach the promise: 'For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened'? (Lk. 11:9,10).[3]

I should like also to grow in confidence in approaching my Lord, weak, tempted and falling far short of the mark as I am. He tells me, he invites me, to come confidently, not because I shall in this life be anything but frail and unworthy, but because I have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God (Heb. 4:14–16). With George Herbert I desire Love not only to 'bid me welcome' but also to 'take my hand' and make me 'sit and eat' at his table. I want to learn to respond to such love less infrequently than I as yet do with 'full assurance of faith'.

In praying for others, I desire God to enlarge my faith, sharpen my perception and deepen my understanding, sympathy and compassion. My care for others is very cold compared with God's. I need to discover more of his love for me, grasp a little better what it cost Jesus Christ to bear away my sin, and his willingness to do so, in order to be able to thank him more gratefully, love him more unreservedly and so care more genuinely for the good of my fellow Christians and my fellow men.

I want to grow in praying with others, not shirking the opportunities, not seeking to parade as someone special, not refusing to do the good God has put in my power to do. Likewise, I desire to pray with increasing dependence on the Spirit's praying in me and through me, and on the promises, precepts, examples and warnings of the Word. I want to pray from where I am, realistically, in touch with my own condition, in touch with the situation of others, of the nation and of the world.

As often as I pray, I need to be taught how to pray. I ask God in his mercy to make me teachable and to keep on teaching me until he takes me home to himself. Then prayer as communion with him will be for ever perfected and for ever growing.

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Personal Experience of Prayer II

DAVID H. ADENEY

'Prayer is an interruption of personal ambition.' I have often thought of these words of Rowland Hogben, my teacher at the China Inland Mission Training Centre in London, where I was studying shortly before sailing for China in 1934. They remind me that a busy life is no excuse for lack of prayer. I would never admit that I considered prayer less important than my other activities, but in practice I have so often found myself postponing or hurrying through a time of prayer because other things needed to be done. I was in effect demonstrating that I regarded my efforts as being more important than waiting upon God. A time spent in prayer is an expression of my faith and dependence on God, and a recognition of the fact that I cannot fulfil his will apart from the grace of the Lord Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit.

From an early age, I had been taught the importance of prayer. One of the greatest legacies received from my parents was the habit of a daily time in the morning spent with God. 'In the morning, O Lord you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation' (Psalm 5:3). The example of my father and mother and the emphasis given in the weekly Bible class and later in summer camps and school Christian Union upon the need for regular daily communion with God set a pattern for all my future life.

Before going to the university I spent six months at the Missionary Training Colony. The hour before breakfast was set aside for private prayer and Bible study, and the times of united intercession, especially in connection with various forms of evangelistic outreach, helped to establish the place of prayer in my life. At the university, the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union had a daily prayer meeting during the noon hour and a longer time of prayer on Saturday evenings. The fellowship helped to sustain faith at a time when the claims of liberal theology had to be answered. Especially the unhurried weekly evening prayer meeting taught me the value of intercession together with other members of the body of Christ.

Prayer and the study of the Scriptures can never be separated. Just as Daniel was encouraged by reading the writings of Jeremiah (Daniel 9:2) to pour out his soul in fervent prayer for the fulfilment of God's promise to the remnant of Israel, so the Christian finds that faith and the inspiration for prayer comes 'by hearing, and hearing by the word of God' (Romans 10:17 AV).

During the early days of language study in China there were times of discouragement. I remember feeling unable to pray and unwilling to join my fellow workers in a special day of prayer. Instead I took my Bible and went into the hills and read through the whole of John's Gospel in one sitting. Becoming immersed in the Word of God allowed the gracious words of Christ to restore faith and communion with the Father. I began to learn the lesson of resting on the promises of God and receiving strength from him — 'He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak' (Isaiah 40:29).

There are other times of prayer from that first term of service in China that stand out in my mind. I think back to the day when my wife and I stood with a Chinese fellow-worker beside the open grave of our second child, who died a few days after his birth. Our Chinese fellow-worker prayed that through our loss our hearts might be drawn closer to heaven where our treasure had been taken.

We learned also to pray with our fellow workers for those who were sick or oppressed by the evil one. After Sunday services, sick people would come asking for prayer, and together with the elders we would lay hands on them. On one occasion I was called to go and pray for someone who was afflicted by an evil spirit. As soon as we entered the house, the man whom I had never met, with the spirit speaking through him in a completely different voice, shouted my name. I was very conscious of the power of evil at that time, but also the power of God to bring victory. It was a privilege to see God answering prayer for those afflicted with evil spirits and with physical disease.

Humility in prayer was another lesson taught us by our Chinese friends. I received great blessing through fellowship with Pastor David Yang[1] and joined him for a short time in his 'Spiritual Workers Team'. One day he asked me to go and pray with him. To my great surprise I found him flat on the floor crying out to God for forgiveness and cleansing. He was one whom I greatly admired and now I was invited to join him as he sought forgiveness, confessing sin and expressing his yearning for the holiness of God. He was so conscious of his own weakness. His humility before the Lord challenged me to struggle in a deeper way against everything in my life that was displeasing to God.

Earnest prayer will sometimes lead to great sorrow, as we see ourselves in all our sinfulness. It may also lead to great joy. During the time with Pastor Yang we had a half day of prayer and I remember going out alone and meditating on the phrase, 'that you may be filled to the measure of all the fulness of God' (Eph. 3:19). This led to a period of great joy. I realised afresh the peace and the joy given by the Holy Spirit: 'For the Kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' (Rom. 14:7).

Faith is strengthened when we see God answering prayer in very specific ways. During our second term of service in China I was working with students. I had meetings with the Christian Fellowship in a university in the city of Hwaining, Anhui. After the meetings were over I needed to get back to our home in Nanjing. But on the day I planned to return I found that the river steamers had all been commandeered by the army. I was told that there was no possibility for civilians to get tickets on the boat going downstream. After praying together with a Chinese friend, I decided to go to the ticket office; no one was there. As we waited suddenly a man came in, went to the

ticket office, saw that nobody was in attendance and then left. On the spur of the moment, I said to my friend, 'Let us follow him.' We followed him and he went right down to the docks and immediately began going on board one of the steamers. Hurriedly I said goodbye to my friend and followed him onto the ship. Halfway up the gangplank he looked back and said, 'Where are you going?' I replied that I wanted to go to Nanjing. He answered, 'Well, I have one extra bed in my cabin. You can come along with me.' When I reached his cabin I discovered that there was a sign on the door saying 'Government Representatives'. He represented the central government, and I was a representative of the kingdom of God! Our prayers had been answered as the Lord had guided me to the ticket office and then on to the ship, just at the right time.

As a member of the China Inland Mission, I had the privilege of having fellowship with spiritual leaders who had experienced the power of prayer in their own lives. In 1941 I was at the mission headquarters in Shanghai. Mr D. E. Hoste, one of the 'Cambridge Seven' and the man who succeeded Hudson Taylor as the General Director of the CIM, accosted me in the hallway, with the words, 'I being in the way the Lord led me, come and pray with me.' Mr Hoste prayed for a very long time, and I was amazed at the way in which he knew the needs and the people right across China. It was a tremendous example of intercession as he identified himself with both missionary and Chinese fellow workers, bearing before the throne of God their needs and the need of the work.

Our last term of service in Asia was spent in Singapore, where I was serving as Dean of the Discipleship Training Centre. Once again, there were new lessons to be learned in the school of prayer. We realised afresh the vital part that prayer plays in maintaining the fellowship of the Spirit.

Bonhoeffer, in the chapter entitled 'The day with others', says that

> the first condition that makes it possible for an individual to pray for the group is the intercession of all the others for him and for his prayers. How can one person pray the prayer of the fellowship without being steadied and upheld in prayer by the fellowship itself? At this very point, every word of criticism must be transformed into fervent intercession and brotherly help. Otherwise how easily might a fellowship be broken asunder right here![2]

I discovered that it is not easy to maintain a vital prayer fellowship in a group of people living in close relationship with one another. I also found that it was only as we prayed together that we were able to overcome difficulties which arose through interpersonal conflict. It became increasingly evident that when there was conflict within the group it was essential for us to pray for one another. Those subjected to criticism must pray for their critics. The person that feels that she or he is being wronged by another believer must pray fervently for that person. By so doing the root of bitterness can be prevented from destroying the unity of the Spirit. That kind of prayer must also be accompanied by praise, for as we thank God for his grace in the life of a brother or sister, we are able to see the working of the Holy Spirit and not concentrate on the failures.

It is not enough just to have times of united prayer. There must also be opportunities for individual solitude with an unhurried time for prayer and

meditation. Once a month we would encourage students to spend several hours in a quiet place by the reservoir where they could be alone with God. Later we would gather together to share something of what we had learned in the quiet hours of the morning.

During recent months I have learned afresh the importance of the prayer which our Lord taught his disciples. They had seen the long times which he spent early in the morning or late at night communing with his Father, and very naturally they wondered what he was doing and how he prayed. Thus they put forward the request, 'Lord, teach us to pray'. In response the Lord Jesus gave them the well known words of the 'Lord's Prayer'.

Introducing a book of sermons given during the Second World War when cities were being destroyed by air raids, the German pastor Helmut Thielicke wrote:

> The Lord's Prayer is truly the prayer that spans the world; the world of everyday trifles and universal history, the world with its hours of joy and bottomless anguish, the world of citizens and soldiers, the world of monotonous routine, sudden terrible catastrophe, the world of carefree children and at the same time of problems that can shatter grown men.[3]

It is amazing to see the way in which this prayer covers every aspect of the needs of the believer. It spans the whole spectrum of the spiritual and physical life. It embraces great things like the kingdom and small things like a piece of bread. It refers to material things and things unseen. It includes our failures and also the assurance of faith and our hope for the future. It is wonderfully economical in words, but comprehensive in meaning. It has been prayed by millions of believers in every generation from childhood to the grave.

If the words alone are repeated in a mechanical fashion, it can have little benefit, but if this prayer is seen to state the principles which should control all our prayer, it can have a tremendous influence upon our lives. I have found that the Lord's prayer can serve as a framework upon which I hang the various elements of my daily prayer. By following it I can make sure that I am praying according to the will of God. When left to myself it is extremely easy for me to become unbalanced in my prayer. I may be tempted to start with prayer for my daily needs, and become so absorbed in myself that I end up with practically no worship and often little confession and praise. But if I follow the pattern given by our Lord, I shall include worship and adoration, personal petitions and concern for the kingdom, confession and prayer for deliverance, ending up with a paean of praise and assurance of victory. I take each phrase of the prayer, meditate upon it and fill it out with my own words.

When I say 'Our Father', I stop and think of God, and my relationship with him through faith in the Lord Jesus. He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3), but because we have received the spirit of sonship we cry, 'Abba, Father'. It is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are 'children of God' (Rom. 8:15–16) and for that reason we belong in a special way to Christ himself. Remember that the Lord Jesus made a distinction when he said, 'I pray for them, I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours' (John 17:9). I remember also that in saying 'Our Father' I am thinking not only of myself but also of my family, of my local church, and indeed of the church throughout the world.

When I pray 'Our Father *in heaven*' I am reminded of his power and glory.

In Christ he has created all things, 'in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities' (Col. 1:16).

I worship the Lord of glory and so I go on to say, 'Hallowed be your name.' In this prayer I am first asking God to make his name holy in the sight of the nations of the earth. Both Isaiah and Jeremiah spoke of God's name being polluted by the evil behaviour of his people (Isaiah 52:5; Jeremiah 34:16). Speaking through Ezekiel God accuses Israel of profaning his name among the nations and declares, 'I will show the holiness of my great name' (Ezek. 36:23).[4] But it is not only through judgment upon evil that God's name is to be proclaimed. It is also through the holy and loving service of those who bear his name.

When I use these words I am convicted of my own sinfulness, for I realise that I am constantly seeking to glorify my own name rather than the name of God. Martin Luther said, 'I know of no teaching in all of scripture that so mightily diminishes and destroys our life as does this petition.'[5] Too often God's name is dishonoured in my life, and so this petition involves repentance: 'I have not hallowed your name — I am often more concerned with the names of other people and especially of my own name, than with the name of God.' As Helmut Thielicke rightly points out, '[The] truth is we cannot pray the Lord's prayer to the glory of God unless at the same time we pray it against ourselves. And he who has not learned to pray this prayer *de profundis* — out of the depth of his repentance — has not really prayed at all.'[6]

I think of the name of God as representing the very character of God. In his great priestly prayer, the Lord Jesus said, 'I have brought you glory on earth . . . I have revealed you to those whom you gave me' (John 17:4,12,26). I need the consuming passion of the Lord Jesus who could say, 'I have not come to seek my own glory but the glory of the one who sent me'. Together with the psalmist I pray, '[Give] me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name. I will praise you, O Lord my God, will all my heart; I will glorify your name forever' (Psalm 86:11–12). We cannot add to the greatness of God, but we can cause God's name to be honoured in the eyes of the people of the world. 'Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together' (Psalm 34:3). At the same time our prayers for others can have the same purpose as Paul's: 'We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ' (2 Thess. 1:12).

After worshipping I go on to pray concerning the kingdom: 'Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' This section of my prayer must deal with God's kingdom and his work in the world today. I am tempted to go on immediately and pray about *my* work but I must first intercede for the work of God throughout the world. The Lord Jesus prayed: 'I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do' (Jn. 17:4), and in Hebrews we read the words of our Lord Jesus, 'Here I am . . . I have come to do your will, O God' (Heb. 10:7). His redemptive work was linked with his revelation of God and the establishing of his kingdom. It is in this part of my prayer that I remember my fellow workers throughout the world and especially in China and the church there as it seeks to reveal the glory of God in a society which knows only the kingdom of man. The daily newspapers are full of stories that show the suffering resulting from the

dominance of the kingdom of darkness. When I pray 'your kingdom come' I have to realise the tragedy of the fact that 'the whole world is under the control of the evil one' (1 Jn. 5:19). Through my prayer I take part in the struggle of the church in every land to bring people 'out of darkness into light'.

After praying that the will of God may be fulfilled through his church I can go on to consider my own needs. 'Give us today our daily bread' reminds me of the multitudes of needs I have, both physical and spiritual. I need to be sustained for the demands of this particular day. I am reminded again that it is not just my daily bread, but our daily bread, and so I think of our family, and of the church. I remember that I am part of a fellowship which is dependent upon the gifts of God's people, and so for myself and for all my fellow workers I pray 'give us today our daily bread'. It is an expression of trust and complete dependence upon the Father who delights to give good gifts to his children. I remember that the Lord Jesus regarded physical needs as important, and spent much of his time ministering to physical needs, healing and feeding the multitude. As I pray for our daily bread, I must also think of the needs of the human family and especially those who lack the necessities of life.

After praying for our daily bread, I come back to spiritual needs in my life. I seek for forgiveness. I am a debtor and I have nothing with which to pay the debt. I think of the question in the parable of the Unjust Steward in Luke 16: 'How much do you owe my master?' I seek to be specific, confessing things that have been displeasing to my Lord. There is so much that I have failed to do and I can only come seeking forgiveness. Prayer is fellowship with God and it involves the healing of broken relationships caused by sin. I cannot ask for forgiveness lightly. I have to repent of my own failure. God does not forgive me because I forgive others, but as one who is forgiven, I must also forgive my brother or sister, and this involves asking for the cleansing of my thoughts that I may be free from any wrong attitudes. I pray for forgiveness not just for me but for my family and for my church, and also that I may have a forgiving spirit to any who may have wronged me.

As I pray for the church throughout the world, I have to identify with the sin of the people of God and seek forgiveness for them as well as for myself. When the sin of a prominent Christian leader is revealed and broadcast throughout the world the whole church suffers. At such a time I am reminded of the way in which Nehemiah and Daniel accepted the responsibility for the sins of their people and prayed for forgiveness — 'We do not make requests of you because we are righteous; but because of your great mercy. O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay because your city and your people bear your Name' (Dan. 9:18–19). I long for this kind of intensity in prayer with its deep concern that the people called by the name of our God in every nation may be cleansed, delivered, and enabled to 'declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light' (1 Pet. 2:9).

One who is forgiven longs to be able to sin no more, and so I pray, 'And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one'. I need to be guided by God away from circumstances which will expose me to temptation. In the Jewish Talmud we find the prayer, 'Bring me not into sin or into iniquity or into temptation, and may the good inclination have sway over me,

and let not the evil inclination have the sway over me'. My prayer is that I may not be brought into the power of temptation. I realise that testings will come. I may well be surrounded by temptations, but I am not to be overpowered by them. James writes, 'Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.' The same word is used for both temptation and testing in James 1:2,3 and 12 and 1 Pet. 1:6,7. My prayer is not only for deliverance from the spiritual dangers that I may meet in the next twenty-four hours but includes the request that I might be delivered from the great trial that may come upon the earth in which the love of many will grow cold. The risen Lord referred to this time of testing when he said to the church in Philadelphia, 'I will also keep you from the hour of trial which is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth' (Rev. 3:10).

After praying to be delivered from the evil one and all the powers of darkness I usually conclude the Lord's prayer with the great affirmation which starts with the little word 'for'. In view of all that has gone before, in view of the assurance that God is reigning, that he is my Father and that he has granted forgiveness to me, I end my prayer with a song of praise: 'For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.' Thus the prayer ends with an expression of faith and hope. In spite of all the darkness and tragedy found in the world around, we rejoice in the unshakeable kingdom and the eternal glory of our God.

I think of all who have prayed this prayer in Chinese prisons and labour camps, and in front of the tanks advancing on defenceless crowds in the streets of Manila in the Philippines. It is true that the words have often been used mechanically like the turning of a prayer wheel and sometimes have been mumbled thoughtlessly. There is no real content to that kind of prayer. But this does not take away from the fact that it is uniquely the prayer given by the Lord Jesus to his disciples, and when used under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who caused it to be written, and when spoken with faith to the one who hears our prayer, the words can be the vehicle of true worship, thereby enabling us to pray according to the will of God.

Because of its very familiarity the various phrases of the prayer can come into our minds as we walk along the street or engage in our regular work. Thus we learn to 'pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests'. Paul reminds us that this involves keeping 'alert and always keep on praying for all the saints' (Eph. 6:18–19). Prayer then becomes an attitude of the Christian's spirit, so that it is natural many times a day to turn our thoughts to the Lord mentioning not only our needs but the needs of friends throughout the world. This means that those who are sensitive to the leading of the Spirit form a vast world-wide network of intercessors. Fellow workers may be continents apart but they continue to work together in prayer for the coming kingdom.

'Lord, teach us to pray' so that prayer becomes not only 'the vital breath' of our spiritual lives but also the power that supports the whole of your church.

Notes to Chapters

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1. *IBD*, p. 1258.
2. W. L. Liefeld, 'Prayer', *ISBE*, 3. 938.
3. William Temple, *Readings in St. John's Gospel* (London: Macmillan, 1939), p. 106.
4. C. S. Lewis, *Voyage to Venus* (London: Pan, 1943), pp. 142f.
5. *Renewal as a Way of Life* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1985), p. 172.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. Pss. 4:1; 6:9; 35:13; 39:12; 42:8, etc.
2. Pss. 5:2; 32:6; 72:15.
3. Question 98; cf. *The Westminster Larger Catechism*, question 178.
4. C. F. D'Arcy, 'Prayer (Christian, Theological)', *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 10 (ed. James Hastings; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1919), p. 171; J. S. McEwen, 'Prayer', *A Theological Word Book of the Bible* (ed. A. Richardson; New York: the Macmillan Co., 1950), p. 169.
5. Roland B. Murphy, *Wisdom Literature & Psalms* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), p. 113.
6. Pss. 17, 86, 90, 102, 142.
7. The basic structure of the lament psalms comprises three main parts: (1) lament proper, (2) petition, (3) confidence and praise. Although the sequence of this structure is not always strictly followed, the three main parts usually occur.
8. Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (trans. Keith Crim and R. Soulen; Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), p. 169; L. Mays, 'Psalm 13', *Int* 34 (1980), p. 279.
9. S. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, vol. 2 (trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas; Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), p. 10.
10. Cf. Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary* (trans. Herbert Hartwell; London: SCM, 1962), p. 79.
11. Mitchell Dahood, S. J., *Psalms I, 1–50* (AB; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1966) p. 77; P. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50* (WBC; Waco: Word, 1983), p. 142.
12. Pss. 44:24; 74:1.
13. Pss. 79:5; 80:4.
14. Cf. Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary*, p. 77.
15. A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, vol. 1 *Psalms 1–72* (London: Oliphant,

1972), p. 395; Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1–72* (London: IVP, 1973), pp. 190f.; S. Terrien, *The Psalms and Their Meaning for Today* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1952), pp. 173f.

16. Cf. F. Delitzsch, *Psalms II* (Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes, vol. v; trans. F. Bolton; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), p. 142. But many contemporary OT scholars regard the two verses (vv.18–19) as a later addition of the exilic or postexilic period: e.g. Anderson, *The Books of Psalms*, vol. I, p. 402; Dahood, *Psalms II: 51–100* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1968), pp. 9–10.

17. Claus Westermann, *The Psalms* (trans. Ralph D. Gehrke; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1980), p. 105; G. W. Anderson, 'The Psalms', *Peake's Commentary on the Bible* (eds. M. Blake and H. H. Rowley; London: Thomas Nelson, 1962), pp. 410f.

18. Accepting the title *lišelōmōh* of the psalm as authentic, this writer assumes that the author is Solomon, although the final verse (v.20) seems to suggest that the author of Psalm 72 is David. Since the authorship of each psalm is usually noted in the beginning of each psalm, the final verse probably indicates the end of the primary collection (Pss. 1–72) of the Psalms in which the majority are written by David.

19. Cf. Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary*, p. 502.

20. Cf. RSV and NASB.

21. Cf. RSV and NASB.

22. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, vol. 1, p. 525.

23. A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), p. 423; Delitzsch, *Psalms II*, p. 306; Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, vol. 1, pp. 526f.; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalmen*, 2. Teilband, *Psalmen 60–150* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), p. 661.

24. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, vol. 1, pp. 224f.

25. Cf. v.1, 'May the Lord answer you when you are in distress; may the name of the God of Jacob protect you'.

26. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, p. 186.

27. Cf. Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdman, 1979), p. 69.

28. Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, p. 31.

29. The following psalms are called psalms of confidence: Pss. 4, 11, 16, 23, 62, 131, and others.

30. In some cultures (such as the Hindu), thanksgiving and praise are sharply distinguished – the latter being impersonal while the former is possible only when dealing with personalities. But in the Psalms, both thanksgiving and praise are closely intertwined and are offered to God who is personal (Pss. 42:4f.; 69:30; 100:4; cf. Ps. 26:7; 95:2; 147:7, etc.).

31. Westermann, *The Psalms*, pp. 53, 69.

32. Ibid., p. 69; cf. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms,* vol. 1, p. 39.

33. Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary*, p. 248.

34. Many commentators (Weiser, Craigie, Anderson) regard Psalms 9 and 10 as a single acrostic psalm. The LXX and the Vulgate treat the two psalms as one; Psalm 10 has no title, which is unusual in the first book (Pss. 1–41) of the Psalms. Psalm 9 has a jubilant tone, while Psalm 10 is viewed as having a complimentary plaintive tone. Nevertheless, the arguments for a single psalm are not conclusive. If Psalms 9 and 10 were originally a single acrostic poem, it is difficult to explain why the lines of six Hebrew letters are obscured in Psalm 10. Furthermore, the theme of thanksgiving and confidence is predominant throughout: in the 38 verses of Psalms 9 and 10, at least half the verses express words of thanksgiving and confidence.

35. Mowinckel, The Psalms in Israel's Worship, vol. II, p. 74.

36. Ibid.

37. Cf. Friedrich Heiler, *Prayer: A Study in the History and Psychology of Religion* (trans. Samuel McComb; Oxford: University Press, 1932), p. 272.

38. Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, p. 31.

39. The following Psalms are characterized by hymnic prayers: Pss. 8, 33, 65, 100, 103, 104, 111, 117, 134–136, 145–150.
40. Cf. Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary*, p. 53; Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, vol. 1, p. 33.
41. Cf. Heiler, *Prayer*, p. 271; *The Authorized Daily Book of the United Hebrew Congregation of the British Empire* (9th edition; London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, n.d.), pp. 44–54.
42. Murphy, 'Faith of the Psalmist', *Int* 34 (1980), p. 235.
43. Ibid.
44. Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975), p. 237.
45. Ibid., pp. 240f.
46. Cf. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, vol. 1, p. 204.
47. Kidner, *Psalm 1–72*, p. 31.
48. Cf. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, vol. 1, p. 184.
49. Gunkel, *The Psalms: A Form-Critical Introduction* (trans. T.M. Horner; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), pp. 15, 32, 36; Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, pp. 80f.; Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary*, p. 79; Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, vol. 1, p. 38.
50. Gunkel, ibid.; Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, vol. 1, pp. 217f.
51. Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, p. 81.
52. Cf. Rogerson and McKay, *Psalms 1–50* (Cambridge: University Press, 1977), p. 96.
53. Cf. Mays, 'Psalm 13', p. 282.
54. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3.20.1.
55. Murphy, 'The Faith of the Psalmist'.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid.; cf. Rogerson and McKay, *Psalms 1–50*, p. 44.
59. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3.20.10.
60. Ibid.
61. Cf. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms*, p. 516; Kraus, *Psalmen*, 2. Teilband, p. 762; Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, vol. 2, p. 614; G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 1 (trans. D. M. G. Stalker; New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 381.
62. Kraus, *Psalmen*, 2 Teilband, p. 762.
63. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3.20.10.
64. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms*, p. 93; Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, vol. 1, p. 160; Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary*, pp. 192f.; Rogerson and McKay, *Psalms 1–50*, pp. 79f.
65. Murphy, 'The Faith of the Psalmist', p. 236.
66. Cf. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms*, p. lxxxvii.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1. See H. Thielicke, *The Evangelical Faith*, Vol. 3 (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1982), pp. 83ff.
2. O. G. Harris, 'Prayer in Luke–Acts: A Study in the Theology of Luke' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1966, pp. 13ff.) alleges only 47% more; but at several points he has overestimated the Matthew count, and he has failed to count in the use of *ainein* and *doxazein* when these are used to denote verbalised praise to God.
3. See Harris (1966), p. 13; P. T. O'Brien, 'Prayer in Luke–Acts', *TynB* 24 (1973), p. 113.

4. So O'Brien (1973), p. 116.

5. The so-called 'Two Document' hypothesis (according to which the agreements in wording and order of account amongst Matthew, Luke and Mark are explained in terms of Matthew and Luke both having used Mark and 'Q' [variously defined!]) has suffered various attacks recently (especially by W. R. Farmer, T. R. W. Longstaff, B. Orchard and M. Goulder) but still, in this writer's view, remains the most probable thesis. For simple surveys of the state of the question see G. M. Styler's appendix in C. F. D. Moule, *The Birth of the New Testament* (London: Black, 1981[3]), pp. 285–316; J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke* (New York: Doubleday, 1981), pp. 63–99; for a more thorough review see C. M. Tuckett, *The Revival of the Griesbach Hypothesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

6. It has been argued since B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels* (London: Macmillan, 1927), pp. 188, 205, that Luke was following another source for his account of the baptism, not Mark; but we do not find this convincing.

7. The language at 9:16 (different from the parallels in Mk. 6:41 and Mt. 14:19) has been taken to mean that Luke understood Jesus to pronounce a blessing on *the bread* itself, rather than a blessing of God for the bread. This has been misunderstood as a sign of Luke's allegedly hellenistic and quasi-magical approach to miracle: he blesses *the loaves* so that they will multiply for the crowd (so *e.g.* P. J. Achtemeier, 'The Lukan Perspective on the Miracles of Jesus: A Preliminary Sketch', in C. H. Talbert, ed., *Perspectives on Luke–Acts* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1983), p. 162. The variant Western and Syriac texts, however, say Jesus blessed [God] over the loaves (*ep'autous*). While this reading has little claim to originality it shows that the accusative was widely understood as one of respect (*i.e.* Jesus blessed [God] with respect to them) or as an instance of metonymy (cf. 1 Cor. 10:16).

8. The withdrawal, and the reference to Jesus departing to what might be translated 'a wilderness place' (Mk. 1:35; Lk. 4:42; 5:16), has suggested to some (notably W. Mauser, *Christ in the Wilderness* (London: SCM, 1963), 107f., and W. L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* (London: MMS, 1974), 80f.) that Mark (and Luke?) portrays Jesus as experiencing the clamour for him to stay, and to heal more, as having something of the character of the initial wilderness temptation. Jesus must resolutely leave, and preach the kingdom of God elsewhere; not merely become a local healer, however much suffering there may yet remain to be alleviated in the area. But the words *erēmos topos* probably merely carry the sense 'lonely place' rather than the symbolic connotation 'wilderness place of temptation', even if some of the observations which led to the suggestion of the latter are sound.

9. Of course, no evangelist states specifically that Jesus prayed at all during this period commonly called 'the temptations of Jesus'; but the reader may perhaps be expected to infer that the forty days were intended at least in part as a period of communion with God, not merely as an ordeal at Satan's hand, from the very fact of Jesus' fasting — for fasting was typically, albeit not exclusively, a form of intensification of prayer (cf. Lk. 5:33 etc.) — and from the wilderness location (cf. *TDNT* 2. 658).

10. So Schlier, *TDNT* 1. 738.

11. Fitzmyer (1981), p. 1444 and I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), pp. 832f.

12. For analysis of Catholic views on this see *e.g.* G. C. Berkouwer, *The Person of Christ* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1954), esp. pp. 219ff.

13. *TDNT* 2. 803.

14. G. H. Twelftree in D. Wenham and C. Blomberg, eds., *Gospel Perspectives* Vol. 6 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1986), pp. 389–92, prefers to think of *each* exorcism as an act of first binding the Strong Man (against E. Best, *The Temptation and the Passion: The Markan Soteriology* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965], p. 13); but, in the metaphor, it is not just one piece of property that is plundered from the bound man's house, but a (plural) selection of his 'vessels' (Mk. 3:27) — *i.e.* (probably) one act of (prior) binding liberates a plurality of erstwhile bound.

15. See *e.g.* C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959 [1977]), pp. 304f.

16. Classically see J. Jeremias, *'Abba'* in *The Prayers of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1967), pp. 11–65. For Conzelmann's rejection and a reply, cf. I. H. Marshall, *The Origins of New Testament Christology* (Leicester: IVP, 1976), pp. 46, 59.

17. Cf. his *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London: SCM, 1970), ch. 3; *idem*, *Jesus and the Spirit* (London: SCM, 1975), pp. 62–68.

18. Against Dunn, see M. M. B. Turner, 'Jesus and the Spirit in Lucan Perspective', *TynB* 32 (1981), pp. 3–42.

19. For this interpretation of the cup see amongst the commentaries *e.g.* Cranfield (*Mark*; and his article 'The Cup Metaphor in Mark xiv. 36 and Parallels', *ExpTim* 59 [1947–48], pp. 137–8); Lane (*Mark*), and Marshall (*Luke*). The relevant OT material is collected in Goppelt, *TDNT* 6. 149–53.

20. We need not doubt Jesus predicted his death — his clashes with the Jewish hierarchy made it virtually inevitable, and his expectation is attested in multiple sources and forms (including both direct affirmation and also mere allusion: e.g. Lk. 12:50). Cf. G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1986), pp. 237–272; 278–283.

21. The long reading here is surely the original: cf. J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1966), pp. 138–58; H. Schürmann, 'Lk. 22:19b–20 als ursprüngliche Textüberlieferung', *Bib* 32 (1951), pp. 336–92, 522–41. For M. Rese's objections and a reply to them cf. M. M. B. Turner in D. A. Carson, ed., *From Sabbath to Lord's Day* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1982), pp. 145f. n. 112.

22. Mark's wording of Jesus' opening petition — 'Father . . . everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me' — admittedly gives a firmer basis for the view presented here than does Luke's (on which see Marshall [1978] p. 831). For the view that the cup Jesus prays be removed is not so much his death but that he might not be left in death, but resurrected, see C. A. Blaising, 'Gethsemane: A Prayer of Faith', *JETS* 22 (1979), pp. 333–43; but note the decisive objections offered by D. A. Carson in F. E. Gaebelein, ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 8. 544.

23. Reading *tō pneumati tō hagiō* with p^{75} B *al.* The dative is usually taken as instrumental, but against this view see M. M. B. Turner, 'Luke and the Spirit: Studies in the Significance of receiving the Spirit in Luke–Acts' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Cambridge University, 1980), pp. 86f., and see independently J. A. Fitzmyer (1981), p. 871.

24. Jeremias has argued for the authenticity of the saying while assuming the definite articles (*the* father, son) to be Aramaic generic articles. *Per contra*, I. H. Marshall (on the basis of Mk. 13:32) argues they are intended absolutely (see 'The Divine Sonship of Jesus', *Int* 21 [1967], pp. 87–103). Given the nature of the claim made, and the fact that the reference of the expression 'the/a father' is 'the Father', the absolute better expresses the semantics of the passage.

25. I have to thank Rev. David Crump, a research student at Aberdeen, for making available to me his material arguing this case in detail. A similar conclusion is hinted at by O'Brien (1973), p. 115, and others to whom he refers there.

26. *Contra* H. Greeven, *Gebet und Eschatologie im Neuen Testament* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1931), pp. 18f., who took the prayer mention to be a literary device to separate Jesus from the crowds; and O. Harris (as at n. 2, pp. 63f.) who argues that it is the means by which Jesus receives revelation concerning his future suffering. Harris's argument for this is that as Jesus is the one praying, not Peter, the prayer must elicit a revelation to Jesus, not to Peter! But this is patently less than logical; and there is no obvious connection between the prayer and Jesus' statement in v.21 concerning the future suffering of the Son of Man, nor any indication that this was regarded by Luke as something newly received.

27. In this instance Harris may be at least partly right. The transfiguration is not so exclusively focused on the revelation to the disciples in Luke as it is in Mark; Luke

allows that Jesus is transfigured, and talks with Elijah and Moses about his future suffering and glory, before the disciples become aware of what is happening (cf. 9:32). But to suggest, as Harris does, that the prayer-motif relates exclusively to the revelation to Jesus arbitrarily narrows the scope of the prayer, and, indeed, is in danger of missing the point of the whole unit, which lies primarily in the disclosure to the disciples.

28. Cf. Foerster, *TDNT* 7. 156f.

29. So Beasley-Murray (1986), pp. 147–56, who gives a good account of the critical issues relating to the prayer. The literature on the *Paternoster* is vast: see *e.g.* Fitzmyer (1981), pp. 907–909, for a brief but representative survey.

30. *Pace, e.g.,* Fitzmyer (1981), p. 902, the wording of Luke 11:1 hardly necessitates that Luke considers the prayer a form of words ever to be repeated rather than an example of prayer as in Matthew 6:9.

31. The translation is mine. For the textual problems see the major commentaries and B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: UBS, 1971), pp. 154–6. Most of the textual variants are to be explained in terms of scribes assimilating Luke to Matthew's better known version. An early version of Luke appears to have read, 'May your Holy Spirit come upon us and cleanse us' in place of 'May your kingdom come' (only in the late minuscules 700 and 162, but attested by Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus of Turin, and possibly Marcion); but it is most unlikely that this represents Jesus' authentic teaching, and even less that it was in the original manuscripts of Luke (for whom the Spirit is rather the power of messianic liberation (on Jesus) or 'the Spirit of prophecy': see Turner (1980), p. 249 n. 73).

32. The two forms of the prayer cannot easily be explained in terms of different redactions of the same source (Q?) — neither Matthew nor Luke was liable extensively to change a prayer that was already in use in his own church circles. On the problem of tradition history see R. Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Waco: Word, 1982), ch. 7 or, classically, J. Jeremias, as at n. 16, pp. 82–107. The commentators are also helpful although brief: see Carson (*Matthew*) and Marshall (*Luke*) especially.

33. See R. J. Bauckham, 'The Sonship of the Historical Jesus in Christology', *SJT* 31 (1978), pp. 245–60. It should be noted that although 'Abba' was used by children in addressing their fathers, it was not restricted to the lips of children: cf. J. Barr, 'Abbā isn't "Daddy"', *JTS* 39 (1988), pp. 28–48.

34. The agent of the passive verb in 'May your name be sanctified!' could either be *creatures* (after the analogy of the Jewish *Qaddish* prayer 'Exalted and hallowed be his great name in the world which he created according to his will') or *God himself* (in which case it is a 'divine passive', a circumlocutionary way of saying 'May God so act as to sanctify his name'). In the context the two possibilities amount to much the same thing, for only God's decisive act at the End *can* sanctify his name; and the outcome of his doing it will be that his creatures acknowledge him as exalted and hallowed.

35. Despite the recent claim to the contrary by C. Rowland, *Christian Origins* (London: SPCK, 1985), pp. 135f., the evidence that Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of God as present in his own words and deeds seems to this writer to be overwhelming: cf. Beasley-Murray (1986), pp. 71–147.

36. The linguistically less probable option is defended nevertheless by none other than Fitzmyer (1981), pp. 904–6 (and perhaps agrees with the adverb 'daily' more easily than the alternative); but cf. C. H. Hemer, '*epiousios*', *JSNT* 22 (1984), pp. 81–94.

37. Carson (1984).

38. Matthew's perfect tense implies our forgiving is a precondition on our asking divine forgiveness; Luke's present tense may well be 'aoristic': i.e. 'as we forthwith forgive . . .', and have similar force.

39. And if a 'disciple' does not so forgive, the point is less that he thereby forfeits the 'right' to ask God's forgiveness, more that his lack of merciful understanding of his 'brother's' sin, and of its grip in himself, both throws doubt on whether he has himself

truly experienced God's grace at all, and indeed on whether he *could*: cf. C. F. D. Moule, 'The Christian Understanding of Forgiveness', *Theol* 71 (1968), pp. 435ff.

40. So Marshall (1978), pp. 461f.; but compare the different treatment afforded by Fitzmyer (1981).

41. For a good account of the cultural circumstances assumed by the parable cf. J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1963), pp. 157f., or, better, K. E. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), pp. 119–34.

42. Jeremias (1963), p. 158; Bailey (1976), pp. 121–24.

43. So Jeremias, p. 158, following Fridrichsen whom he inadvertently transforms (see Bailey, p. 130). But can *anaideia* ('shamelessness') bear this positive sense of 'avoidance of shame'? The linguistic evidence is not entirely conclusive (cf. Bailey, pp. 130–34), but the passage seems to require something like it.

44. See Jeremias (1963), p. 226; W. Ott, *Gebet und Heil: Die Bedeutung der Gebetsparänese in der lukanischen Theologie* (Munich: Kösel Vlg., 1965), pp. 102–111.

45. Ott (1965); Marshall (1978), pp. 468f.

46. Greek *pneuma agathon*, with p^{45} L *pc vg*, and the only reading that explains all the others, but is not explained by them.

47. See Turner (1980), pp. 113–115.

48. Luke's wording properly denotes the *mulberry*, not the sycamore (fig-mulberry); but *sukaminos* (mulberry) tended to be confused with *sukomorea*: see *e.g.* Marshall (1978), p. 644 for detail. It was the 'sycamore' (cf. Lk. 19:4) or 'fig-mulberry' that was known for its deep roots that made it proverbially difficult to pluck up.

49. On the tradition history of the sayings see W. R. Telford, *The Barren Temple and the Withered Tree* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1980), pp. 98–109 (who takes Mt. 17:20 to be the most primitive version); but the arguments for Luke's version are more telling: cf. Fitzmyer and Marshall. And we cannot exclude the possibility that Jesus gave essentially the same teaching with different wording and illustrations.

50. Cf. Telford (1980), pp. 110–117.

51. *Contra* Fitzmyer (1981), p. 1142.

52. The point is well made by A. C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1980), pp. 12–16, and others, that the original hearers will have identified positively with the Pharisee; and the tax-collector (as a collaborator with the Roman powers) would be disdained as a traitor. For a culturally sensitive exegesis cf. K. E. Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), pp. 142–56.

53. Once again a fresh and culturally nuanced exegesis is offered by Bailey (1980), pp. 127–41.

54. So Marshall (1978), p. 669; Bailey, ibid.

55. For this emphasis in Luke cf. A. A. Trites, 'The Prayer Motif in Luke–Acts', in (ed.) Talbert (1983), pp. 174f.

56. For the interpretation of these see most recently S. Farris, *The Hymns of Luke's Infancy Narratives* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1985) and the literature there cited.

57. *Pace e.g.* G. Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (London: SCM, 1974), pp. 207f.

58. See especially the recent work of D. P. Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor in Luke–Acts* (Linz: SNTU, 1982), pp. 21–94.

59. For this dimension of NT understanding see especially *e.g.* T. Ling, *The Significance of Satan* (London: SPCK, 1961); for Luke see Turner (1981), pp. 18–24 and the literature there cited.

60. The 'kingdom of God' as God's *presence* has been most forcefully argued by B. Chilton, 'Regnum Dei Deus Est', *SJT* 31 (1978), pp. 261–70. Cf. his *God in Strength — Jesus' Announcement of the Kingdom* (Freistadt: Plöchl, 1979).

61. O. G. Harris' work (as at n. 2) prepared for this understanding by arguing that prayer in Luke–Acts is the means by which God gives men guidance for their role in

redemption history. See also O'Brien (1973), pp. 112ff., and A. A. Trites in (ed.) Talbert (1983), p. 185.

62. For the view Luke deliberately highlights parallels between Jesus' prayer and that of Christians in Acts, see O'Brien (1973), p. 122; but in our view this is simply a minor chord in the more general theme of Jesus–Stephen–Peter–Paul parallels which dominate Acts.

63. See above, p. 61, for the significance of prostration in prayer.

64. See *e.g.* A. J. Mattill, 'The Jesus–Paul Parallels and the Purpose of Luke–Acts', *NovT* 17 (1975), pp. 17–46, or, at length, W. Radl, *Paulus and Jesus im lukanischen Doppelwerk* (Bern: Lang, 1975).

65. Every phrase here is hotly contested: for a fuller account cf. Turner in (ed.) D. A. Carson (1982), pp. 113–24.

66. For development of these themes see R. T. France, 'The Worship of Jesus: A Neglected Factor in Christological Debate', and M. M. B. Turner, 'The Spirit of Christ and Christology', in (ed.) H. H. Rowdon, *Christ the Lord* (Leicester: IVP, 1982), chs. 2 and 10 respectively.

67. For the Spirit as 'the Spirit of prophecy', in Acts, and the significance of this, see M. M. B. Turner (1980), chs. 4 and 5, or more briefly in (ed.) H. H. Rowdon (1982), ch. 10.

68. For Luke's understanding of such phenomena cf. M. M. B. Turner, 'Spiritual Gifts: Then and Now', *VE* 15 (1985), 7–64, with the literature cited there.

69. J. D. G. Dunn, 'Spirit and Kingdom', *EXpTim* 82 (1970–71), pp. 36–40, thinks Luke regards the Spirit as the presence of the kingdom in Jesus (and in him alone) during the ministry; and the presence of the kingdom in the disciples after (and not before) Pentecost. The way is open for both Dunn and S. S. Smalley, 'Spirit, Kingdom and Prayer in Luke–Acts', *NovT* 15 (1973), pp. 79–93, to argue that the *primary* object of prayer in Luke–Acts is the reception of the kingdom which is received in the gift of the Spirit. But against this it must be maintained that Jesus' Spirit-endowment is not essentially to do with his personal existential experience of God's reign, but a power by which he brings *others* (including the disciples) to participate in it. Nor does Luke correlate the Pentecost gift with the kingdom of God for which the disciples are to pray; the latter is rather the consummation at the parousia. Cf. M. M. B. Turner, 'Jesus and the Spirit in Lukan Perspective', *TynB* 32 (1981), pp. 3–42, esp. pp. 28–34, and, for more detailed response, Turner (1980), pp. 106ff.

70. The stated purpose has been variously understood: cf. S. S. Smalley, *John: Evangelist and Interpreter* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), ch. 4, and D. A. Carson, 'The Purpose of the Fourth Gospel: John 20:31 Reconsidered', *JBL* 106 (1987), pp. 639–651.

71. The reading *monogenēs theos* at 1:18 is the most probable (cf. Metzger [1971], p. 198; C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to Saint John* [London: SPCK, 1978], p. 168), but the scribes who instead supplied *monogenēs huios* were not far wrong in their interpretation: cf. 3:16, 18, *etc.*). For the rendering 'God the only Son' cf. R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (London: Chapman, 1971), p. 17.

72. For this emphasis in John cf. M. L. Appold, *The Oneness Motif in the Fourth Gospel* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1976), but without fully accepting his elucidation of the theme.

73. *Pace* E. Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1968). This vigorous work is rightly criticised as onesided (see *e.g.* G. Bornkamm, 'Zur Interpretation des Johannesevangeliums. Eine Auseinandersetzung mit E. Käsemanns Shrift "Jesu letzter Wille nach Johannes 17"', *EvTh* 28 (1968), pp. 8–25. For a brief but penetrating account of assessments of John's Christology see D. A. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility* (Atlanta: Knox, 1981), pp. 146–60.

74. Carson (1981), p. 160.

75. For introduction cf. Brown (1971), pp. 745–51, or R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to Saint John* (London: Burns and Oates, 1968–1982), 3. 197–202.

76. On 'glory' and 'glorify' in John see especially W. Thüsing, *Erhöhung und Verherrlichung Jesu im Johannesevangelium* (Munster: Aschendorffsche Vlg, 1960, [2]1970).

77. As Barrett (1978), p. 502, almost allows before opting for the alternative that an empowering for the incarnate ministry is referred to (so also Brown, and E. Haenchen, *John* [Philadelphia: Fortress: 1984]; others (*e.g.* Schnackenburg) take it as either proleptic or retrospective of a *post-exaltation* situation. Unfortunately the linguistically informed study by H. Ritt, *Das Gebet zum Vater: Zur Interpretation von Joh 17* (Würzburg: Echter Vlg, 1979) which gives a careful study of the semantic relations of 17:1b to 17:2, became available to me too late to be used in this study.

78. On this whole motif see especially Carson (1981), pp. 154–60.

79. The best work on this whole area is Carson (1981).

80. For this view see T. Forestell, *The Word of the Cross: Salvation as Revelation in the Fourth Gospel* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1974). More broadly cf. L. Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1965), ch. 4; or (more up-to-date, but in less detail) the corresponding chapter in his book *The Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983).

81. For a warm, popular exposition of the prayer informed by careful scholarship cf. D. A. Carson, *The Farewell Discourse and Final Prayer of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), pp. 173–207.

82. On this motif see especially S. Hanson, *The Unity of the Church in the New Testament* (Uppsala: Almqvist, 1946).

83. On Jesus' works in John see, *inter multos alios*, Schnackenburg (1968), pp. 508–12, or J. M. Boice, *Witness and Revelation in the Gospel of John* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1970), pp. 88–100.

84. For this insight I am grateful to the observation of D. A. Carson (1981), pp. 170f. and (1980), pp. 104ff.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

1. K. Stendahl, 'Paul at Prayer', *Int.* 34 (1980), p. 240.

2. This is expanded in Gal. 1:3–5 to include a brief description of the saving work of Christ and an ascription of praise to God the Father. The greeting is abbreviated in 1 Thess. 1:1 and Col. 1:2 (some mss). In 1 and 2 Timothy the word 'mercy' is added to the formula and in Titus 1:4 Jesus is described as Saviour instead of Lord. For the purposes of this essay the evidence of the thirteen epistles traditionally attributed to Paul will be considered without any attempt to enter into the debate about authorship. However, the focus will be on the epistles whose authorship is generally uncontested.

3. G. P. Wiles, *Paul's Intercessory Prayers* (SNTSMS 24; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 108–114.

4. Ibid., pp. 114–115. However, the suggestion of Wiles that the position of these benedictions 'in the liturgically oriented closing section of the letters may give them a special significance as a "transition to the actual breaking of the bread"' (following Cullmann) is purely speculative. We have no ground for assuming a celebration of the Lord's Supper at every early Christian gathering when the letters of Paul were read out.

5. Although it is possible to translate the Aramaic here 'Our Lord has come', it makes better sense in the context to take it as a prayer to Christ for his coming again. Compare Rev. 22:20, where the same prayer is expressed in Greek ('Amen. Come, Lord Jesus'), and *Didache* 10:6. Cf. C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Black, 1971), pp. 397–8.

6. The argument here follows Wiles, *Prayers*, pp. 22–44.

7. Cf. Wiles (*Prayers*, p. 55 n. 3) on the linking of God and Christ in prayer language, and note his indication of the literature relevant to this question.

8. Wiles (*Prayers*, pp. 31–2) argues that Paul's use of the title 'our Father' in 1 Thess. 3:11 is 'rooted in the traditional use of this title in Jewish prayers' and gives specific examples. Cf. J. Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus* (ET London: SCM, 1976), pp. 11–29.

9. A. Hamman, *La Prière. I. Le Nouveau Testament* (Tournai: Desclée, 1959), p. 274. He concludes that prayer to Christ was admissible but that Paul maintained continuity with Jewish usage, as did Christ himself, by addressing prayer consistently to God the Father.

10. Cf. G. Harder, *Paulus und das Gebet* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1936), pp. 44–5, 65–6. He notes that the genitives imply a gift bestowed by God.

11. Wiles, *Prayers,* pp. 61–71.

12. Ibid., p. 154.

13. P. T. O'Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings in the Letters of Paul* (SuppNovT 49; Leiden: Brill, 1977), p. 11.

14. Hamman, p. 291. He notes the change from blessing in Jewish usage to thanksgiving as 'the permanent state of the Christian' based on God's grace in Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 1:4; 2 Cor. 1:11; 4:15; 1 Thess. 5:18). Cf. P. T. O'Brien, 'Thanksgiving within the structure of Pauline Theology', *Pauline Studies*, ed. D. A. Hagner and M. J. Harris (Exeter: Paternoster, 1980), pp. 50–66.

15. Wiles, *Prayers*, p. 167. He observes that thanksgiving for Paul involved 'a mood not only of ceaseless wonder and praise, but also of intimate gratitude to God. It was only within this prior consciousness of particular gifts and graces received, that particular intercessory supplications could be offered' (172).

16. P. T. O'Brien, 'Thanksgiving and the Gospel in Paul', *NTS* 21 (1974–5), p. 150.

17. Ibid., p. 155.

18. C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2 volumes (Edinburgh: Clark, 1975–9), 1. 75.

19. Ibid., p. 76. Cf. the discussion of various interpretations of this phrase by O'Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings,* pp. 211–214.

20. F. J. Leenhardt, *The Epistle to the Romans* (ET London: Lutterworth, 1961), p. 43.

21. Wiles, *Prayers*, p. 182. Cf. his note 3 on p. 181.

22. O'Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings*, pp. 21–2: 'Although the customary three hours each day of Jewish prayer are to be borne in mind, it ought not to be concluded that the apostle's prayers were limited to such periods.'

23. Cranfield, *Romans* 1. 78. O'Brien (*Introductory Thanksgivings,* pp. 216–219) argues that Paul was influenced by the prayer-sighs of the Psalmists (*e.g.* Pss. 35:17; 42:2; 13:2).

24. M. Barth, *Ephesians 1–3* (AB 34; New York: Doubleday, 1974), p. 58. Note his conservative conclusions about Pauline authorship (pp. 36–50).

25. Ibid., p. 368. Cf. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), pp. 324–331.

26. R. P. Martin, *2 Corinthians* (WBC 40; Waco: Word, 1986), p. 417.

27. The perfect tense in v.9 (*eirēken*, lit. 'he has said') suggests that 'he still hears the echo of this divine oracle' (Martin, *2 Corinthians*, p. 418). The answer remains as an ever-present comfort and encouragement to the apostle, and the pleading for the thorn to be removed has ceased as a consequence.

28. Cranfield, *Romans* 1. 117.

29. Cf. H. W. Beyer, *TDNT* 2. 754–61. The Greek verb *eulogeō* means 'to speak well of, praise, extol' and hence 'to bless'; *eulogētos* is a verbal adjective meaning 'blessed' or 'praised'.

30. O'Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings,* pp. 233–4, following the research of C. Westermann, *The Praise of God in the Psalms* (ET London: Epworth, 1966), pp. 87–9.

31. R. J. Ledogar, *Acknowledgment, Praise-Verbs in the Early Greek Anaphora* (Rome: Herder, 1968), p. 136.

32. Cranfield, *Romans* 2. 589. Note his discussion about the possible sources from which Paul may have borrowed in formulating this hymn.

33. O'Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings,* pp. 237–9. Cf. P. T. O'Brien, 'Ephesians 1: an unusual introduction to a New Testament letter', *NTS* 25 (1978–9), pp. 504–16.

34. Cranfield, *Romans* 1. 397 n. 2. Cf. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1982), pp. 198–9.

35. Cranfield, *Romans* 1. 398–9, against Jeremias, *Prayers,* p. 65 n. 75. AV, RV, ASV, NEB, NIV follow the punctuation advocated by Cranfield.

36. O. Cullmann, 'La prière selon les Epîtres pauliniennes', *TZ* 35 (1979), p. 95. Note that the neuter *krazon* in Gal. 4:6 indicates that it is the Spirit who cries. Hence NIV makes the point clear by adding the italicised words: 'God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, *the Spirit who* calls out, "*Abba*, Father."'

37. Hamman, *La prière*, p. 282.

38. Cullmann ('La prière', p. 95) is representative of those who envisage tongues-speaking here, and E. Käsemann (*Commentary on Romans* [ET London: SCM, 1980], p. 227) is representative of those who see some other liturgical event.

39. Cranfield, *Romans* 1. 399.

40. Jeremias, *Prayers,* pp. 57–65.

41. Ibid., p. 65. 'A new way of praying is born. Jesus talks to his Father as naturally, as intimately and with the same sense of security as a child talks to his father' (p. 78).

42. Käsemann, *Romans*, p. 239. He views the 'weakness' here not in psychological or moral terms but with reference to the 'external temptations (*Anfechtung*) of Christian existence' (p. 240).

43. So NIV and Cranfield (*Romans* 1. 421–2), against RV, RSV and NEB, which reduce the meaning of the Greek word *ti* to 'how' (as if it were a matter of the correct technique of prayer, not the subject-matter). One thing is in view here, namely, 'what is right, i.e. according to God's will (*katho dei* is parallel to *kata theon* in v.27), for us to pray for (or to pray)' (Cranfield).

44. Cf. my discussion of Heb. 7:25 in the article in this volume entitled 'Prayer in the General Epistles' (p. 105) and in *Hebrews and Perfection* (SNTSMS 47; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 114–116.

45. The expression *stenagmois alalētois* means 'with unspoken groanings' rather than 'with wordless sighs', since the noun *stenagmois* recalls the use of the verb *stenazō* in vv.22, 23, where the stronger sense of groaning is required by the context. The alpha privative together with the passive form of the adjective (*alalētois*) means 'unspoken' in the sense of 'silent' (rather than 'unspeakable').

46. So, for example, Cullmann, 'La prière', pp. 96–7.

47. Käsemann, *Romans*, p. 241 (citing Zahn, Althaus, Fuchs and Balz in support of the notion of a liturgical process).

48. Cranfield, *Romans* 1. 423–4. E. A. Obeng ('The Origins of the Spirit Intercession Motif in Romans 8:26', *NTS* 32 [1986], pp. 621–632) argues that Jesus spoke of the Spirit in advocatory terms in Mk. 13:11; Jn. 15:26–7; 16:18ff., and that this must have been an influence on Paul in his thinking about the Spirit's intercession. Cf. more generally on this passage P. T. O'Brien, 'Romans 8:26,27. A Revolutionary Approach to Prayer?', *RTR* 46 (1987), pp 65–73.

49. Wiles, *Prayers*, p. 287 (my emphasis).

50. G. F. Hawthorne, *Philippians* (WBC 43; Waco: Word, 1983), p. 184, taking *tou theou* as a descriptive genitive. The reference will not be to the peace of reconciliation with God which is his gift to all who have a saving faith in Jesus, but to 'the tranquillity of God's own eternal being', 'the calm serenity that characterizes his very nature'.

51. Ibid., pp. 183–4 (citing Barth).
52. M. Barth, *Ephesians 4–6* (AB 34A; New York: Doubleday, 1974), p. 786. See below on Rom. 15:30 as a possible equation of prayer with a struggle or fight.
53. The two present participles in v.18 ('praying' and 'watching') could belong to the series of participles dependent on the imperative 'stand' at the beginning of v.14 ('having girded', 'having shod', 'having taken up') or more directly to the imperative 'take' in v.17.
54. J. Calvin, *Sermons on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1973), p. 678.
55. When Paul says 'I will pray with the spirit, but I will pray with the mind also' (1 Cor. 14:15), it seems from the previous verse that he is referring to his own spirit, as a non-rational part of his psychological make-up, rather than to the Holy Spirit. Speaking in tongues is a form of prayer in which Paul's spirit prays but his mind remains 'unfruitful' — his mind is not engaged in the exercise. However, cf. the discussion by C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Black, 1971), pp. 319–320.
56. Cranfield, *Romans* 2. 777. Following C. K. Barrett he says the meaning is simply 'join me in earnest prayers to God on my behalf'.
57. V. C. Pfitzner, *Paul and the Agōn Motif* (SuppNovT 16; Leiden: Brill, 1967), pp. 82–129.
58. Wiles, *Prayers*, pp. 267–9.
59. S. K. Williams, 'The "Righteousness of God" in Romans', *JBL* 99 (1980), p. 246. Cf. his section 'The Purpose of Romans and the Nature of Paul's Central Argument', pp. 245–255.
60. Wiles, *Prayers*, p. 270.
61. *E.g.* M. R. Austin, 'Can Intercessory Prayer Work?', *ExpTim* 89 (1978), pp. 335–9. Cf. the responses in *ExpTim* 90 (1979), pp. 142–5, and P. F. Jensen, 'Prayer in Reformed Perspective', *RTR* 44 (1985), pp. 65–73.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 6

1. F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1964), p. 413. Cf. J. Swetnam, 'On the literary genre of the "Epistle" to the Hebrews', *NovT* 11 (1969), pp. 261–9.
2. Cf. Bruce, *Hebrews*, pp. xxiii–xxxv; D. G. Peterson, 'The Situation of the "Hebrews" (5:11–6:12)', *RTR* 35 (1976), pp. 14–21.
3. The pattern of the argument in 5:1–10 is:
   (A) *Human Highpriesthood* (vv.1–4)
   v.1 General description of function
   vv.2–3 A necessary quality
   v.4 The necessary calling
   (B) *The Highpriesthood of the Son of God* (vv.5–10)
   vv.5–6 The necessary calling
   vv.7–8 Acquisition of the necessary quality
   vv.9–10 General description of function.
4. In *Hebrews and Perfection* (SNTSMS 47; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 83, I have argued that *metriopathein* (v.2) is best translated 'to restrain anger' rather than 'to deal gently' (RSV, NIV), in view of the use of this terminology outside the Greek Bible. It is not simply equivalent in sense to the verb *sumpathēsai* (4:15).
5. I have argued in *Hebrews and Perfection* (cf. pp. 96–103) that the perfecting of Christ in Hebrews involves his proving in temptation and his fulfilment of the priestly role through death and exaltation. By this means he is 'qualified' to fulfil the role of heavenly Redeemer for his people.

6. G. Vos, 'The Priesthood of Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews', *PTR* 5 (1907), p. 585. So also B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: Macmillan, 1914), p. 128.

7. English versions such as RSV, NEB and NIV rightly understand *eulabeia* in the context to mean 'godly fear' or 'reverent/humble submission', rather than the fear of death.

8. A. B. Davidson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1882), p. 112.

9. C. Spicq, *L'Epître aux Hébreux* (Etudes Bibliques, 2 vols.; Paris: Gabalda, 1952), 2.115. Cf. Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection,* pp. 91–2.

10. RSV takes *eis to panteles* as a literary variant for *pantote* ('always'), which is perfectly possible (cf. BAG *s.v. panteles*), and attaches the expression to *dunatai* ('he is able'). However, the translation 'consequently he is able for all time to save' is a less natural reading of the Greek syntax.

11. Westcott, *Hebrews*, p. 193. He gives the present tense of the infinitive *sōzein* its full force: 'the support comes at each moment of trial'.

12. Cf. D. M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (SBLMS 18; Nashville/New York: Abingdon, 1973), p. 150.

13. S. A. Nairne, *The Epistle of Priesthood* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1913), p. 201. I have discussed some of the traditional approaches to the concept of Christ's heavenly intercession in *Hebrews and Perfection*, p. 248 n. 64. In its positive usage, the verb *entunchanein* means 'to approach' someone with a request (often on behalf of someone else) and cannot be pressed to mean 'to plead' (cf. *TDNT* 8.242–3).

14. Westcott, *Hebrews*, p. 231.

15. A. Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary and Liturgy in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Achievement of Salvation in the Epistle's Perspective* (St. Meinrad, Indiana: Grail, 1960), p. 199. He argues decisively against literalistic interpretations of Christ's heavenly intercession on pp. 168–202. E. A. Obeng ('The Origins of the Spirit Intercession Motif in Romans', *NTS* 32 [1986], pp. 621–632) argues that Jesus' identification of himself as the Son of Man during his earthly ministry provides the key to the early church's understanding of him as heavenly intercessor.

16. H. Preisker, *TDNT* 2.331. Although it is true to a certain extent that the ritual of the old covenant was 'calculated rather to keep men at a distance from God than to bring them near' (F. F. Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 149), it is significant that our writer could describe those who participated in that ritual as, at least in some sense, 'those who draw near' (10:1).

17. The use of the present subjunctive (*kratōmen/katechōmen* and *proserchōmetha*) suggests that the exhortations are to *continue* these activities.

18. J. Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1924), p. 58.

19. Westcott, *Hebrews,* p. 108.

20. When *proserchesthai* is used to express the idea of foreigners coming to join the congregation of Israel as proselytes (*e.g.* Exod. 12:48–9; Lev. 19:33; Num. 9:14), the notion of entering into a relationship with the God of Israel is thereby implied. In Sir. 1:28, 30; 2:1 the more general sense of relating to him by serving him is prominent. In Heb. 11:6 the one who draws near to God is the one who seeks him in faith.

21. The verb *engizein* ('to draw near') is employed in Gen. 18:23 with reference to Abraham's prayer. In passages such as Isa. 29:13; 58:2; Zeph. 3:2; Haggai 2:15 the same verb is used to refer to Israelites who draw near to God in cultic worship or in the more spiritualised sense of prayer. Indeed, the people of God are characterised in Ps. 148:14 as 'those who draw near to him' (cf. Judith 8:27).

22. The first interpretation is argued by F. F. Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 86, and the second by O. Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (MK; 13th edn; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), p. 209 (esp. n. 1).

23. The adjective *eukairos* means 'well-timed, suitable' (*BAGD*). Cf. Mk. 6:21.

24. N. A. Dahl, 'A New and Living Way: the Approach to God According to Hebrews 10:19–25', *Int* 5 (1951), p. 409.
25. Michel, *Hebräer,* p. 346. Cf. 1 Pet. 2:4.
26. H. Schlier, *TDNT* 5.884.
27. W. C. van Unnik, 'The Christian's Freedom of Speech in the NT', *BJRL* 44 (1961–2), p. 44. Schlier does not give sufficient stress to the manward direction of *parrēsia* in Hebrews, whereas van Unnik rightly observes the writer's exhortation to profess their Christian hope amidst the surrounding dangers (cf. particularly 10:35).
28. Westcott, *Hebrews*, p. 320.
29. Schlier, *TDNT* 5.884.
30. A 'complementary parallelism' exists in 10:22, viewing Christian conversion-initation in its inward and outward aspects. So J. D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London: SCM, 1970), pp. 211–214.
31. P. H. Davids, *The Epistle of James* (NIGTC; Exeter: Paternoster, 1982), p. 24.
32. Ibid., p. 25, following the argument of F. O. Francis, 'The Form and Function of the Opening and Closing Paragraphs of James and 1 John', *ZNW* 61 (1970), pp. 110–126. C. R. Wells ('The Theology of Prayer in James', *CTR* 1 [1986], pp. 85–112) argues that 'the theology of prayer gives the Epistle precisely the theological unity it seems to lack' (p. 86).
33. Davids, *James*, p. 56. Cf. R. M. Cooper, 'Prayer. A Study in Matthew and James', *Encounter* 29 (1968), pp. 268–277.
34. J. A. Kirk, 'The Meaning of Wisdom in James: Examination of a Hypothesis', *NTS*, 16 (1969), p. 27. He notes the apparent allusion to Mt. 7:11/Luke 11:13 and the connection between Wisdom and God's Spirit in Jewish literature (*e.g.* Isa. 11:2). Cf. Davids, *James*, p. 56.
35. D. J. Moo, *The Letter of James* (TNTC; Leicester: IVP, 1985), p. 135.
36. Davids, *James*, p. 71, noting particularly the catchword device *leipomenoi* ('lacking', v.4.) — *leipetai* ('lacks', v.5).
37. Kirk, 'Wisdom', p. 38.
38. Both Davids (*James*, p. 72–3) and Moo (*James*, p. 63) argue convincingly that *haplōs* is best rendered 'sincerely' or 'without reservation' in the context (contrast RSV, NEB and NIV, 'generously').
39. Moo, *James*, p. 65. The verb *diakrinō* in the context suggests 'not so much intellectual doubts as a basic conflict in loyalties' (p. 64) — as indicated in Jas. 4:4–8.
40. R. V. G. Tasker, *The General Epistle of James* (TNTC; London: Tyndale, 1956), p. 85. The implication is not so much that pleasures or desires are in conflict with one another but that they war against 'the soul' (cf. 1 Pet. 2:11) or the personality seeking to serve God. The 'members' in view will be the bodies of individual Christians rather than 'members of the church': 'the form of the argument is movement from external conflict in the community to its internal basis' (Davids, *James*, p. 157).
41. Cf. L. T. Johnson, 'James 3:13–4.10', *NovT*25 (1983), pp. 327–347. So Moo, *James,* pp. 140–1, against Davids, *James*, pp. 158–9.
42. Davids, *James*, p. 159. He rightly observes that the unqualified form of teaching about prayer 'simply encourages one to trust God and to depend on him, while the qualified form tells one *how* to pray and correct abuses' (p. 160).
43. Ibid., p. 192. The verb *psallō* originally meant to play by touching a stringed instrument, and then to sing to the accompaniment of such an instrument (*e.g.* Pss. 33[32]:2,3; 98[97]:4,5). It is generalised in the LXX to indicate any song of praise (*e.g.* Pss. 7:17[18]; 9:2,11[3,12]). Thus, in the NT it refers to private or public praise (1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; cf. Col. 3:16).
44. J. Wilkinson, *Health and Healing. Studies in New Testament Principles and Practice* (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1980), p. 148. Contra A. Hamman ('Prière et culte dans la lettre de Saint-Jacques', *ETL* 34 [1958], p. 41), who argues that an ordinary sickness, not necessarily serious or even mortal, is envisaged. Certainly there is no

justification for the traditional Roman Catholic view that the sick person here is being prepared for death. Cf. Tasker, *James*, pp. 128–133.

45. *E.g.* C. Armerding, 'Is any among you afflicted? A Study of James 5:13–20', *BibSac* 95 (1938) pp. 195–201; C. Pickar, 'Is anyone sick among you?' *CBQ* 7(1945) pp. 165–174; D. R. Hayden, 'Calling the Elders to Pray', *BibSac* 138 (1981) pp. 258–286; C. R. Wells, 'The Theology of Prayer in James', *CTR* 1 (1986) pp. 85–112.

46. Wilkinson, *Health*, p. 148. Moo (James, pp. 183–4) points out that when *astheneō* is used in the sense of spiritual weakness this meaning is usually made clear by a qualifier (cf. Rom. 14:2, 'in faith'; 1 Cor. 8:7, 'in conscience') or by the context.

47. Davids, *James*, p. 194. Wilkinson (*Health*, pp. 150–1) argues effectively against the view that the elders were to be called because of any healing function inherent in their office. Tasker (*James,* p. 129) comments on why it may have been particularly encouraging to have the elders pray at the bedside of the sick.

48. Wilkinson, *Health*, pp. 152–4. The strongest argument in his favour is the fact that anointing with oil was used only for the healing of physical disease in the NT (Mk. 6:13; Lk. 10:34; cf. Is. 1:6; Jer. 8:22). H. Schlier (*TDNT* 1.231) wrongly takes Mt. 6:13 to refer to anointing in connection with exorcism as well as physical healing. Wilkinson details several changes in later church history regarding the practice of anointing the sick with oil which are 'more readily understood if the oil is regarded as a medicine rather than the symbolical material of a religious rite'.

49. Tasker, *James*, p. 131. Moo (*James*, p. 178) opposes this interpretation on the ground that 'there is simply no evidence that anointing with oil was generally used with such a purpose'. However, his own argument, that the anointing symbolised the setting apart of the person for God's special attention, is based on a tenuous association with the regular meaning of the verb *chriō* (ibid., pp. 179–181).

50. Hamman, 'Prière', p. 42.

51. J. A. Motyer, *The Tests of Faith* (London: Inter-Varsity, 1970), p. 117. He rightly insists that the effect of praying 'Thy will be done' in conjunction with a prayer for healing is 'to take away from our prayers all the limitations of our knowledge of what our real needs are, all the limitations of our proposals for the meeting of our needs, and to place ourselves and our needs unreservedly into the hands of that infinite wisdom, love and power which is our heavenly Father's' (p. 118).

52. Tasker, *James*, p. 133.

53. Davids, *James*, p. 195.

54. Ibid., p. 196. So also Moo, *James*, pp. 182–3.

55. The Greek participle *energoumenē* can be taken in a passive sense to mean 'when it is energized (by God or the Spirit)' (so Davids, *James*, pp. 196·7) but is more naturally read as a middle, meaning 'in its working' (so Moo, *James*, p. 187, and most modern translations).

56. Cf. the discussion by J. N. D. Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude* (BNTC; London: Black, 1969), pp. 15–26, who concludes that the document is 'far from being an unoriginal pastiche', even though it may contain snatches of hymns or creeds or homiletical material. Cf. also D. Hill, 'On Suffering and Baptism in 1 Peter', *NovT* 18 (1976), pp. 181–9.

57. Cf. Kelly, *Peter*, pp. 5–11, and E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St Peter* (London: Macmillan, 1969), pp. 52–6, who argues similarly that the persecutions were spasmodic, unofficial, and social rather than legal in character.

58. Cf. Gen. 9:26; 14:20; 1 Sam. 25:32; Pss. 66:20; 72:18; Lk. 1:68 and my discussion of Paul's use of the *berakah* form in this volume, pp. 92, 113.

59. P. T. O'Brien, 'Ephesians 1: an unusual introduction to a New Testament letter', *NTS* 25 (1979), p. 509. He further comments that the presence of certain motifs applicable to a baptismal context does not mean that they or the passage are to be restricted exclusively to such a context. *Contra* J. Coutts, 'Ephesians 1:3–14 and 1 Peter 1:3–12', *NTS* 3 (1956), pp. 115–127.

60. Kelly, *Peter*, pp. 190–1.
61. J. E. Adams, *Trust and Obey. A Practical Commentary on First Peter* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1978), p. 150.
62. D. E. Hiebert, *First Peter* (Chicago: Moody, 1984), p. 294. However, Hiebert wrongly suggests that the aorist participle should be translated as a present ('casting all your anxiety'). Cf. Kelly, *Peter*, p. 208.
63. I. H. Marshall, *The Epistles of John* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), p. 14. Cf. S. S. Smalley, *1,2,3 John* (WBC 51; Waco: Word, 1984), p. xxvii, who describes it as 'a "paper" which sets out to expound Johannine teaching and ideas now preserved in the tradition and theology of the Fourth Gospel'.
64. Cf. F. O. Francis, 'Form and Function', pp. 121–6.
65. Cf. J. R. W. Stott, *The Epistles of John* (TNTC; London: Tyndale, 1964), pp. 74–88, whose headings are reflected in this outline of the argument.
66. Marshall, *Epistles*, p. 113, endorsed by Smalley, *1,2,3 John*, p. 30.
67. J. L. Houlden, 'Salvation Proclaimed II. 1 John 1:5–2:6: Belief and Growth', *ExpTim* 93 (1982), p. 135.
68. R. Bultmann, *The Johannine Epistles* (ET, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), p. 72. He rightly points out that 'perfect love' in 4:18 means the love perfected in/with us in 4:17 (p. 73).
69. Marshall, *Epistles*, pp. 196–7.
70. Ibid., p. 245.
71. Smalley, *1,2,3 John*, p. 298. Cf. his whole discussion of these verses (pp. 297–301) and that of Marshall (pp. 245–251).
72. Cf. D. M. Scholer, 'Sins within and sins without: an interpretation of 1 John 5:16–17', in G. F. Hawthorne (ed.), *Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), pp. 230–246. He rightly argues that, from the perspective of 1 John, 'death' is the condition of one who is out of fellowship with God.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 7

1. Graeme Goldsworthy, *The Lamb and the Lion: The Gospel in Revelation* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 1985), p. 11.
2. Thus Rev. 4:8 and 11 have inspired the writing of many hymns while Rev. 11:15 and 19:6 have been immortalised by Handel's Messiah.
3. As related by Myung-Hyuk Kim in the conference on prayer that precipitated this book, Korean Christians treasured the book of Revelation in perilous times and expositions on the book were features often in their prayer movement. In a similar vein, another participant at the conference, David Adeney, mentioned the importance given to the book by Chinese Christians facing persecution.
4. For a recent defence of the traditional view that the author (the apostle John) was exiled on the island, see Colin J. Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1985), pp. 26–29. In the book of Revelation, being a witness giving testimony to Jesus usually involves suffering and even death (2:13; 6:9; 11:7; 12:11, 17; 17:6; 20:4).
5. The word 'worship' (*proskyneō*) is used very often in Revelation: at least 9 times in total for the dragon, the beast and its image; 5 times for God; 2 times for angels (worship prohibited). For the observation that Revelation is about the conflict of sovereignties, and that worship is indicative of the limits and extension of sovereignty, see R. J. Bauckham, 'The Lord's Day', in D. A. Carson, ed., *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical and Theological Investigation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), pp. 241–245.
6. The verb 'overcome' (*nikaō*) appears often in the book of Revelation (at least 13 times) and conquering through suffering is an important motif, as seen in 5:5, 9–10.
7. Wayne R. Spear, *The Theology of Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), pp. 7–8.

8. See, for example, O. Hallesby, *Prayer* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1950), pp. 135–149.

9. Though Rev. 22:17 has *erchou* ('come') twice, commentators are divided as to the nature of the plea: whether it is prayer directed to God or an invitation directed to the outsider. For further discussion, see p. 113.

10. This broader understanding of prayer (inclusion of statements addressing God in the third person) is also reflected in Hallesby, p. 142 (quoting Rev. 5:13); Herbert Lockyer, *All the Prayers of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959), pp. 174–178; R. E. Clements, *In Spirit and in Truth* (Richmond: John Knox, 1985), pp. 285–295.

11. In Greek the construction is: articular Greek noun(s)/participial phrase/personal pronoun(s) in dative case for the object of praise, followed or preceded by articular Greek noun(s) in the nominative case for descriptive epithets. However, a slightly different construction is found in 19:1 (the object of praise is in the genitive case).

12. The construction in Greek is:

axios estin + articular noun in nominative
axios ei + articular noun(s) in nominative } *labien*
± articular noun(s) in accusative case.

13. It is true that in the doxologies, substantives like 'glory', 'honour', 'thanks', 'praise', etc. are closely related to the response of men and angels. Cf. R. H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 150, commenting on 5:12. Similarly, G. R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation* (NCB; London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1974), p. 128. However, those who are praying are without prominence.

14. A literal translation of 19:3 is 'Hallelujah, and the smoke from her . . .'. Even though 'for' or 'because' is not used here, the conjunction *kai* ('and') may be a Hebraism introducing a circumstantial clause giving the reason. Cf. R. H. Charles, *The Revelation of St. John* (ICC; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, repr. 1970) 2.120.

15. Thus Mounce, p. 139, regards the attributes of God mentioned in 4:8 as central to the Apocalypse. Likewise, M. C. Tenney thinks that this hymn defines the character and power of God, being basic to God's rule: cf. M. C. Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), p. 182.

16. The symbolism of some features has been interpreted differently by various commentators. R. E. Coleman, *Songs of Heaven* (New Jersey: Revell, 1980), p. 29, basing his argument on the fact that jasper and carnelian are the first and last stones in the breastplate of Old Testament high priests, claims that their inclusion in Rev. 4 is a symbolic way of bringing the chosen people of God into the throne scene. To some, the rainbow is reminiscent of God's covenant with Noah and so serves as a sign of divine mercy. Cf. Beasley-Murray, p. 113; G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine* (BNTC; London: Black, 1966), p. 63. The sea of glass is regarded by Caird as a symbol of the reservoir of evil, based on the Babylonian creation myth (p. 65), while W. Hendriksen, *More than Conquerors* (London: Tyndale, 1962), p. 86, takes it to indicate sanctifying power from the blood of Christ. While not denying the merit of these conjectures, it is perhaps safe to say that the whole scene rather gives a general impression of splendour and transcendence.

17. Cf. Tenney, p. 173.

18. Mounce, p. 140.

19. Beasley-Murray, p. 119.

20. So Mounce, p. 140.

21. See *TDNT* 1.340, s.v. *amnos*; *NIDNTT* 2.410–12, s.v. 'lamb, sheep'; Beasley-Murray, pp. 124–25.

22. In addition to beasts, angels dominate the scene in apocalypses. Likewise, numbers and objects have symbolic significance. The main concern of aopcalypses is to delve into heavenly realities and describe the end events. Though the book of Revelation falls into this genre, it does not entirely resemble other works of this nature. Thus it is not pseudonymous like most others and it is 'epistle' and 'prophecy'

as well. Cf. Beasley-Murray, pp. 12ff. Of course, the fact that Revelation is apocalypse does not imply that John the Seer never saw the visions.

23. For identifications of biblical precedents, cf. Caird, pp. 70–71; L. Mowry, 'Revelation IV-V and Early Christian Liturgical Usage', *JBL*, 71 (1952), 75–84; G. Goldsworthy, pp. 22–23.

24. For contemporary parallels, cf. Beasley-Murray, pp. 120–123, for a detailed discussion of the contract deed and the legal testaments. Cf. also Charles 1.137–38 for details on the testament. For the suggestion that the scroll was in seven parts, each kept in place with an individual seal, cf. Charles, ibid.; L. Morris, *The Revelation of St. John* (TNTC; Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1969), p. 94.

25. Even though all seals must be opened before the Roman contract deed and the testament can be read, this does not necessarily preclude ch. 6 from being part of the content of the scroll, unless one is pedantic in interpreting the symbolism.

26. As Beasley-Murray (pp. 122–23) has shown, it is not easy to decide between the two. In any case, the interpretation would not be greatly affected.

27. Cf. section V, below.

28. Tenney, p. 182.

29. On this interpretation, ch. 12 is a vignette that depicts events relating to Christ's first coming as well as the defeat of Satan, both by Christ on the cross and by the saints in union with him. Cf. Caird, pp. 152ff.

30. Here we take *ebasileusas* as an inceptive and not a gnomic aorist, indicating a time in the past in which God decisively dethroned evil and entered on his reign. It is possible to understand it in a proleptic sense, denoting absolute certainty about an event yet to come. However the absence of *ho erchomenos* ('who is to come') here favours the former interpretation.

31. Caird, p. 141.

32. For Old Testament parallels, cf. Kyu Nam Jung's paper in this book (pp. 35–57).

33. Cf. Mounce, p. 158 n. 21, citing Josephus, *War* vii. 418–19.

34. For the Greek construction of both doxologies, cf. n. 11.

35. For the symbolism of the white garment and palm branches, cf. Mounce, p. 171.

36. For understanding 'salvation' as 'victory', cf. Caird, p. 100; P. Ellingworth, 'Salvation to Our God', *BT* 34 (1983), pp. 444–45. Cf. also Rev. 12:11.

37. Cf. Mounce, p. 339.

38. Richard Bauckham, 'The Worship of Jesus in Apocalyptic Christianity', *NTS* 27 (1980–81), pp. 322–341.

39. For the universalist view, cf. Caird, pp. 198f.; for the millenial understanding, cf. Beasley-Murray, p. 236; Coleman, p. 127. For understanding 'all nations' as 'Christians from all nations', cf. G. E. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), p. 206. For understanding 'worship' as 'submission' only, cf. Mounce, pp. 288f.

40. Cf. Mounce, p. 138.

41. Cited in Bauckham, 'Worship', p. 323.

42. Cf. Mounce, pp. 336f.; Caird, p. 232. This seems preferable to the view that the multitude in 19:1–2 refers to the myriads of angels in 5:11. For the latter view, cf. Morris, p. 100; Beasley-Murray, p. 270.

43. An alternative interpretation of ch. 7 regards the 144,000 and the great multitude as referring to Christian Jews and Gentiles respectively, citing the word 'firstfruits' of 14:4 as indicative of the 144,000's Jewish Christian identity. As a rebuttal, one might note the possibility of a translation of the word *aparchē* other than 'firstfruits': *e.g.* Isborn T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John — Studies in Introduction with a Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, repr. 1979), pp. 648–49; Charles 2.3–7.

44. *TDNT* 2.807.

45. Beasley-Murray, p. 145 n. 2.

46. Cf. Charles 1.227f.; Mounce, pp. 157f.

47. Cf. Caird, pp. 84f. in response to R. H. Charles' charge of personal vindictiveness against the martyrs.

48. For a good presentation of this position, cf. D. R. Davies, 'The Relationship between the Seals, Trumpets and Bowls in the Book of Revelation', *JETS* 16 (1973), pp. 149–58. Comments by Caird, p. 106, and Mounce, pp. 45–47 are also useful.

49. This is clearer in Greek: *phialas chrysas gemousas tou thymou tou theou* being reminiscent of *phialas chrysas gemousas thymiamatōn*.

50. This is also noticed by Mounce, p. 289.

51. For the insistence that the white robe symbolised the resurrection body, cf. Charles, 1.cxvf.; Caird, p. 86. For views close to mine, cf. Mounce, pp. 159f.; Beasley-Murray, p. 136.

52. Christian martyrs are in view here, as parallel expressions in 1:2 show. This is also in line with the hortatory purpose of the whole book. In an article which seeks to update statistical materials circulated earlier, David Barrett insists that this is supremely the age of martyrdom, with huge numbers being martyred each year: cf. his 'Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission: 1986', *IBMR* 10/1 (1986), pp. 22–23.

53. Cf. Caird, p. 107.

54. Cf. Mounce, pp. 31–36, for a good discussion on the two dates; Colin Hemer, pp. 3–5 for arguments supporting a date in the reign of Domitian.

55. It is true that scholars challenge the notion of a persecution under Domitian, and deny that Christians were required by Domitian to participate in the emperor cult; so, for example, John Sweet, *Revelation* (London: SCM, 1979), pp. 24–26. However, Colin Hemer has convincingly demonstrated that complex forces were at work which resulted in persecution of genuine Christians. These included rigorous extraction of the temple tax from Jews; Domitian's insistence on obligations of the imperial cult for non-Jews; and the introduction of the curse of the *minim* in prayers of the Jewish synagogues.

56. Cf. L. Mowry, *art. cit.*

57. Cf. Mounce, pp. 309, 158 n. 21.

58. Cf. L. Mowry, *art. cit.*; D. E. Aune, 'The Influence of Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial on the Apocalypse of John', *BR* 28 (1983), pp. 5–26. For other examples of the 'polemical parallelism' between the cults of Christ and that of Christ, cf. Hemer, pp. 4, 86–87.

59. For such an existential understanding, see Clements, p. 289; Bauckham, 'The Lord's Day'.

60. See R. Beauvery, 'L'Apocalypse au risque de la numismatique . . .', *RB* 90 (1983), pp. 243–260, Plate I.

61. The Roman satirist Juvenal recounts the vile and debased profligacy of the Roman Empress Messalina who served incognito in the public brothels: *Sat.* vi. 114–32, cited in Mounce, p. 310.

62. See, for instance, the article by L. Mowry; J. J. O'Rourke, 'The Hymns of the Apocalypse', *CBQ* 30 (1968), pp. 399–409; M. H. Shepherd, Jr., *The Paschal Liturgy and the Apocalypse* (Richmond: John Knox, 1960); F. Manns, 'Traces d'une Haggadah pascale Chrétienne dans l'Apocalypse de Jean?' *Antonianum* 56 (1981), pp. 265–295.

63. Cf. K.-P. Jörns, 'Das Himmlische Ratsversammlung Motivgeschichtliches zu Apk. 5, 1–5', *ZNW* 54 (1963), pp. 254–67, cited in Bauckham, *art. cit.*, p. 339 n. 45; T. Holtz's review of Jörns in *TLZ* 97 (1972), pp. 358–360.

64. For a convincing presentation of these arguments, cf. E. Stauffer, *New Testament Theology* (ET London: SCM, 1955), pp. 202f., 310f.; Ralph P. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), pp. 42–46.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 8

1. 'There was no god to speak of, except myself', Agehananda Bharati, *The Light at the Center: Context and Pretext of Modern Mysticism* (Santa Barbara: Ross-Erikson, 1976), p. 43. Bharati observes that 'orthodox Jews, Christians, and Muslims really cannot seek this union and be pious at the same time, because losing one's identity and becoming the cosmic ground is a deadly heresy in these teachings' (p. 28). See E. P. Clowney, *CM: Christian Meditation* (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979).

2. Clowney, ibid., pp. 7–18.

3. The translation 'no word' is more appropriate than 'no thing' in both passages, since it is the word of God's promise that is in view. Both *dabar* and *rhēma* mean 'word' as their primary significance. 'Too wonderful' is a more literal translation of the Hebrew phrase.

4. The terms describing the flaming and smoking fire are used again to describe the appearing of God at Sinai (Gen. 15:17; Exod. 19:18; 20:18; cf. Isa. 31:9; Deut. 4:11; 5:22). When the fire of God's presence passed between the pieces, God was taking an oath, swearing by the threat of dismemberment to keep his promise to Abraham (cf. Jer. 34:18–20).

5. On the manifestations of God in the Old Testament, cf. Edmond Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament* (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1958), pp. 73–85. Jacob seems to misunderstand the flow of the narrative in Exodus 33. God's affirmation 'My face will go with you' (33:14) expresses the granting of Moses' petition, as is seen in Moses' reaffirmation of it (33:15). The 'face' of God is not a substitute for his presence. It is unnecessary, too, to suppose that the Old Testament text was altered to remove references to seeing God. The narratives reflect both the essential incomprehensibility of God and his clear revelation of himself.

6. *Sullām*, the word for 'stairway', implies a stone stairway, similar, presumably, to the ziggurat stairways described by André Parrot, *The Tower of Babel* (N.Y., 1955). The NIV marginal reading of Genesis 28:13 is to be preferred. It is supported by the same prepositional phrase in Genesis 35:13, 'and God went up from beside him'. Cf. Genesis 45:1.

7. The name *yiśrā'ēl* would normally be understood as meaning 'God contends', with *'ēl* as the subject. The explanation in Genesis 32:28 seems to imply a play on words. Not only does God contend with Jacob, but Jacob contends with God, and prevails.

8. 'Jacob's thigh is Jacob's progeny': P. A. H. de Boer, 'Genesis XXXII:23–33: Some Remarks on the Composition and Character of the Story', *NTT* 1 (1946–1947), pp. 149–163. See also J. Pedersen, *Der Eid bei den Semiten* (Strassburg, 1910), p. 151; F. van Tright, 'La signification de la lutte de Jacob près du Yabboq, Gen. 32:23–33,' *OudStud* 12 (Leiden: Brill, 1958), pp. 280–309.

9. E. A. Speiser, trans., 'The Creation Epic', VI:31,32, in James B. Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near East*, vol. 1 (Princeton University Press, 1958), p. 37.

10. Henri Blocher points out the significance of this passage in his insightful discussion of the image of God in man: 'The spirit conferred on man does not emanate as a portion of the Spirit of God . . .' *Révélation des origines* (Lausanne: Presses Bibliques Universitaires, 1979), p. 75 (ET *In the Beginning* [Leicester: IVP, 1984], p. 82, reads a little differently).

11. Roberto M. Unger gives a devastating critique of the concept of personality that contemporary culture takes for granted: *Knowledge and Politics* (New York: Free Press/Macmillan, 1975), pp. 29–62.

12. Theodore Parker Ferris, Rector, Trinity Church, Boston, in a sermon on 'The Empty Tomb', Easter, 1967, published by the church, n.d., p. H-1.

13. The concept of a chance universe where there are no laws, only statistical averages of events, swings the pendulum away from a clockwork universe, but is no more congenial to Christian theology. Even the approach that sees the universe as an

information processing system tells us more about our own culture than the cosmos. See Jeremy Rifkin, *Algeny* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984); Paul Davies, *God and the New Physics* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984).

14. As Rifkin points out, ibid., pp. 34–43.

15. On *ḥesed*, see Gerald A. Larue, 'Recent Studies in Ḥesed' in the Alfred Gottschalk translation of Nelson Glueck, *Ḥesed in the Bible* (New York: Ktav, 1975). Glueck's emphasis on the obligation of *ḥesed* has been disputed by later scholars. See Francis Andersen, 'Yahweh, the Kind and Sensitive God', in P. T. O'Brien and D. G. Peterson, eds., *God Who is Rich in Mercy* (*Festschrift* for Broughton Knox; Homebush West, NSW: Anzea/Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), pp. 411–488. When used of God, the term expresses his love and mercy, his devotion to those he has bound to himself by his antecedent grace.

16. See Numbers 14:13–19, where Moses again prays on the basis of God's revealed name.

17. The verb is *šāḥāh* in the hithpael. See Johannes Herrmann, 'Prayer in the O.T.', *TDNT* 2.785–800. 'It seems there can be no prayer without prostration' (p. 789).

18. See Georges Pidoux, 'Quelques allusions au droit d'asile dans les Psaumes', in *Maqqél Shâqédh, La Branche d'Amandier: Hommage à Wilhelm Vischer* (Montpellier: Causse Graille Castelnau, 1960), pp. 191–197.

19. It is possible that *ton arton ton epiousion* should be understood as 'tomorrow's bread', referring to the bread of the coming age: so Joachim Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1974), pp. 100, 101. The reference would then not be to the daily supply of manna.

20. John's Gospel connects the symbolism of the water flowing from the side of the crucified Christ with the invitation of Jesus in 7:37. That passage is best punctuated to read: 'If anyone thirst, let him come to me, and let him drink who believes in me. As the Scripture says, "From within him shall flow rivers of living water."' Cf. Raymond E. Brown, *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to John I-XII* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966), pp. 319–323. John presents Jesus as the source of the Spirit in his death as well as in his resurrection (20:22).

21. Cf. the ARV translation and its defence in Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1–72* (London: Tyndale Press/IVP, 1973), p. 108. On the structure of the psalm of individual lament, cf. Claus Westermann, *The Praise of God in the Psalms* (Richmond: John Knox, 1965), pp. 64–81.

22. Westermann, ibid., p. 80.

23. The word for 'difficult' in Jeremiah 33:3 can mean 'fortified'.

24. See Werner Foerster, *From the Exile to Christ* (trans. G. E. Harris; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), p. 13.

25. Ibid., pp. 156, 228.

26. R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (London: Oxford University Press, 1913), 2.649. Cf. Foerster, ibid., p. 159.

27. On the Old Testament background of these passages, cf. Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977); Stephen Farris, *The Hymns of Luke's Infancy Narratives* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1985).

28. Jeremias, ibid., pp. 73–75.

29. *Contra* Jeremias, ibid., p. 78. Cf. discussion by M. M. B. Turner in this volume, p. 65.

30. Cf. note 19 for the possibility that 'daily bread' is 'bread of tomorrow', a reference to the feast of the future kingdom, of which we receive a foretaste each day. Cf. also Ernst Lohmeyer, *'Our Father', an Introduction to the Lord's Prayer* (trans. John Bowden; New York: Harper & Row, 1965). Cf. Luke 6:21; 22:30; Rev. 7:16f.

31. See above, note 30.

32. When Jesus says 'I am' in the Gospels, the divine name is brought into view (*e.g.* John 18:5).

33. J. P. Versteeg, *Het Gebed volgens het Nieuwe Testament* (Amsterdam: Briejten & Schepperheijn, 1976).

34. As the author of Hebrews points out, Genesis does not record any end to the life of Melchizedek. This is remarkable in a book where the death-knell so regularly tolls: 'and he died' (cf. Heb. 7:3,8). Cf. Philip E. Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 253.

35. Cf. Hughes, ibid., p. 68.

36. On the much debated passage, Romans 8:26,27, cf. the commentaries and Michel de Goedt, 'The Intercession of the Spirit in Christian Prayer', in Christian Duquoc and Claude Geffré, eds., *The Prayer Life* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972), pp. 26–38; Charles Hodge, 'The Spirit's Intercession', in *Conference Papers* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1879); B. B. Warfield, 'The Spirit's Help in Our Praying', in his *Faith and Life* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, repr. 1979); Ernst Käsemann, 'The Cry for Liberty in the Worship of the Church', ch. 6 in his *Perspectives on Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969). The passage has been carefully studied in an unpublished paper by Sylvain Romerowski, 'L'Esprit de Christ intercède'.

37. Joseph B. Mayor, *The Epistles of Jude and II Peter* (Grand Rapids: Baker, repr. 1979), p. 190.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 190.

39. Cited in Wayne R. Spear, *The Theology of Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), pp. 24–27. The citation is from Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963) 3.289.

40. See Spear, ibid., pp. 25,26.

41. The reading 'ask me in my name' is well supported: cf. Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), p. 244.

42. While 'paraclete' in John's Gospel means more than an advocate in a legal setting (it includes intercessor, mediator, spokesman), the legal meaning is clear. The Spirit comes to represent us, to take our case as Jesus has done. Cf. George Johnston, *The Spirit-Paraclete in the Gospel of John* (Cambridge: University Press, 1970), pp. 119,120.

43. Calvin, *Institutes* I:xiii:17, cited in Spear, p. 27.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 9

1. Obviously, one's understanding of spirituality is dependent on one's view of God, man and the world — one's world-view. A brief discussion on world-view is included below in the section on Hindu spirituality (cf. n. 11 below).

2. Rodolf Otto's classic approach to religion is relevant here. In his book *The Idea of the Holy* (trans. John W. Harvey; New York; Oxford University Press, 1926), he relates the experience of religion with a sense of the overwhelming, the mysterious with awareness of something luminous, the portentous with fear that is qualitative, the fascinating with its motive for self-reflection and with energy as power that elevates the worshipper (cf. J. M. Houston, 'Spirituality', in Walter E. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984], pp. 1046f.).

3. Wolfhart Pannenberg understands spirituality as equivalent to piety. He says that there are three elements involved here. 'First, a specific focus on doctrine, second a particular concept of the world of the personal and social experience and third, a characteristic style of life or perhaps the plurality of life styles relates to the peculiar focus on doctrine and to the respective conception of the human life in the world' (*Christian Spirituality* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983], pp. 14–15). By contrast, Bruce J. Nicholls writes, 'Spirituality is experiencing the redeeming work of Christ and

the recruiting power of the Holy Spirit' ('Role of Spiritual Development in Theological Education', *ERT* 8 [1984], p. 129). Vatican II defined spirituality as 'the life of intimate Union with Christ in the Church . . . maintained by the spiritual helps common to the faithful, chiefly by active participation in the liturgy' (A. Flannery, ed., *Vatican II* [New York: Costello, 1975], pp. 770ff.). The World Council of Churches' workshop on spirituality in 1974 defines it as 'Repentance, asceticism, sacrifice and willingness to suffer', based on Philippians 2:7–8 (H. Kruger and W. Muller-Romheld, eds., *Bericht aus Nairobi 1975* [Frankfurt: Lembeck, 1976], pp. 321–324). However, the WCC Subunit on Dialogue with Men of other Faiths and Ideologies clarified 'Sharing in Spirituality' as 'one's desire for emphatic understanding of Worship, devotion and meditation in the religious tradition and praxis of others' (*Bericht,* p. 47). Segundo defines spirituality as 'reflection on, and openness to, what God is doing in History'. M. M. Thomas, who moulded the WCC's understanding of spirituality, defines it thus: 'I am using the spiritual here in its broad sense to include both the cultural and the religious, that is, the fundamental framework of meaning which is assumed by a society and the beliefs about ultimate reality which reinforce this assumption.' Typically, Thomas does not start with the substantive *spirit* but with its adjective *spiritual*, which allows him to include the cultural element, 'the fundamental framework of meaning which is assumed by a society', as well as the religious element, 'the beliefs about the ultimate reality which reinforce this assumption'. For documentation and discussion, cf. Sunand Sumithra, *Revolution as Revelation* (New Delhi: ICN/TRACI, 1984), p. 91f. Developing this approach, elsewhere Thomas writes: '[Human] spirituality, one might say, is the way in which man, in the freedom of self-transcendence, seeks a structure of ultimate meaning and sacredness within which he can fulfil or realise himself in and through his involvement in the bodily, the material and the social realities and relations of his life on earth' (ibid.). It must be noted that here spirituality is understood as a *way* instead of a *state*.

4. Gordon S. Wakefield, 'Spirituality', in Alan Richardson and John Bowden, eds., *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology* (London: SCM, 1983), p. 549.

5. Cf. Robert M. Yule, 'Christian Spirituality', *ERT* 2 (1978), p. 106f.

6. James M. Houston, 'Spirituality Today', in Robin Keeley *et al.*, eds., *Christianity: A World Faith* (Tring, Herts.: Lion Publishing, 1985), p. 368. Emphasis added.

7. Ibid.

8. The Orthodox concept of *Sobornost*, including both 'catholicity' and 'conciliarity' and used since Khomiako, somehow retains also the full freedom and personal integrity of the individual member (cf. Herbert Cunliffe-Jones, ed., *A History of Christian Doctrine* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1980], p. 456ff.). Roman Catholics defend a sacramental spirituality whose perfect model is the blessed virgin Mary (cf. *Vatican II*, pp. 77ff.; cf. also Paul Puthanandgady, 'Liturgy and Theology', *Theologizing in India,* [Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1981], pp. 146–153).

9. It is not intended here to go into the trichotomy-dichotomy debate, but only to point out that man's constitution is made up of both the material, the body, and immaterial, spirit or soul. Some languages do not have terms for 'spirit', such as the German! Martin Hengel says that a lack of a proper word for spirit in German is its greatest lack — so the Germans generally use the term *Spiritualität* to mean spiritual life, piety, religious zeal, spiritual or ecstatic experience.

10. Robin Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology* (Madras: CLS, 1975), pp. 256–257: 'There can be no question then that Christianity's third and last great culture confrontation is that with Hinduism . . . we are faced with two chosen peoples, not one, for whereas Europe, the near East owe their religion directly or indirectly to the Jews, further Asia owes hers directly or indirectly to the Indians'; 'The materials for the church will not be completely assembled until Indians' thought forms take their place among them.'

11. We can best approach Hindu spirituality by looking at the Hindu concept of

God. For (as already indicated above), behind every notion of spirituality there is a worldview, and behind that worldview is the key question of one's concept of God.

What can we say about the Vedic understanding of gods? There is no one unified system of beliefs in the *Rigveda*, the oldest Hindu Scripture. There is a lot of confusion as to the origin, function and status of gods. Dominant characteristics are exchanged from one god to the other. Even though the gods of the *Rigveda* are good, supporters of the truth, and friends, yet they are characterised less prominently by their morality than by their greatness or power. Predominantly there are male gods, except *Ushas* and the mother of gods, *Aditi*. The 'higher' gods are good, defenders of virtues, moral, immortal (*i.e.* limited in their existence to a *Kalpa* which is equivalent to several millions of years). It is also true to say that the Rigvedic gods are anthropomorphic. They become angry, they indulge in revenge and insult, they are despondent, they fight. Each deity is given a specific function. *Rudra* is predominantly destructive while *Vishnu* is presented in his saving aspects. *Agni* is the one who is the mediator between men and god (and yet a god himself as *Soma* also); *Prajapati* is the creator or the maker of the whole universe, but it is very significant to note also that there are no images in *Rigveda*.

There is admittedly no concept of one supreme God. The number and distribution of prayers, addressed to the various gods, suggests this assertion. Yet there are indications in several of the prayers of a monistic approach to deity:

> In the beginning rose *Hiranyagarbha*, born Only Lord of all created beings, He fixed and holdeth up this earth and heaven. What God shall we adore with our oblation?
>
> Giver of vital breath, of power and vigour, he whose commandments all the Gods acknowledge: The Lord of death, whose shade is life immortal. What God shall we adore with our oblation?
>
> Who by his grandeur hath become Sole Ruler of all the moving world that breathes and slumbers; He who is Lord of men and Lord of cattle. What God shall we adore with our oblation?
>
> His, through his might, are these snow-covered mountains, and men call sea and *Rasa* his possession: His arms are these, his are these heavenly regions. What God shall we adore with our oblation?
>
> By him the heavens are strong and earth is steadfast, by him light's realm and sky-vault are supported: By him the regions in mid-air were measured. What God shall we adore with our oblation?
>
> To him, supported by his help, two armies embattled look while trembling in their spirit, When over them the risen Sun is shining. What God shall we adore with our oblation?
>
> What time the mighty waters came, containing the universal germ, producing *Agni*, Thence sprang the Gods' one spirit into being. What God shall we adore with our oblation?
>
> He in his might surveyed the floods containing productive force and generating Worship. He is the God of gods, and none beside him. What God shall we adore with our oblation?
>
> Ne'er may he harm us who is earth's Begetter, nor he whose laws are sure, the heavens' Creator. He who brought forth the great and lucid waters. What God shall we adore with our oblation?
>
> *Prajapati*! thou only comprehendest all these created things, and none beside thee. Grant us our hearts' desire: when we invoke thee may we have store of riches in possession.
>
> (*Rigveda* X, Hymn 121)

Das Gupta, the doyen of Hindu philosophy, says, 'Intelligent readers will find here neither polytheism nor Monotheism, but a simple primitive stage of belief to which both of these may be said to owe their origin' (Surendranath Das Gupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy* [New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975] 1.17). Max Müller says, 'There is Monotheism which precedes the Polytheism of the Vedas and even in the invocation of their innumerable Gods the remembrance of a god one and infinite breaks the rough mist of an idolatrous phraseology like the blue sky that is hidden by the passing clouds' (*The Origin of Religion*, p. 269). No doubt that 'full-blooded Monism developed only in the *Upanishad* as commentary on *Ahabrahmasmi* ("I am *Brahman*")'. What is perhaps nearer to the truth is that, since these Rigvedic hymns were written by various people at various times, each author had the tendency to make his god (*istadevata*, 'one's favourite god') the supreme god. As such we see several references to different gods as the god above all the others, *e.g. Agni, Indra, Prajapati, Vayu, Aditi, Soma, Savithri, Dyaus, Varuna, Vishnu, Rudra*, and the like. Some divide the numerous gods into three regional deities: the Celestial region, Earth (the terrestrial sphere) and *antharika loka* or the atmospheric space. Others divide the gods into seven types: gods of the upper world, of the air, of the earth, abstract deities, inferior deities, demon deities and ancestral spirits. As Max Müller (*op. cit.*) wisely observes, in all this polytheism, it is truer to say that the authors practised henotheism or kathenotheism (the word Max Müller coined for this purpose) rather than monotheism. Though there was no idol worship in *Rigvedic* times, one can differentiate three types of worship: gross worship, in which matter itself is considered as God; image worship, in which the image or idol is a symbol or a representation of God; and existence worship, in which it was believed that the deity existed in the idol as its house. The lack of idolatry in *Rigvedic* times also explains why there was no magic at this early stage.

In *Rigveda*, the classification of gods indicates that even demons were accepted as deities and were to be worshipped. The great problem asked in the *Upanishad* is, 'What is the reality from which all things originate, by which all live and unto which all is dissolved when destroyed?' The name given to this reality is sometimes *Brahman* ('god'), sometimes *Atman* ('soul'), and sometimes *satt* ('being'). The whole of Hindu philosophy and religion rests on what is meant by these two words, *atman* and *brahman*. The two *mahavakyas* (great statements) of Upanishads — *tatvam asi*, 'Thou art that' (meaning that God is everything) and *ahambrahmasmi*, 'I am *brahman*' (meaning that every individual soul is identical with God) — demonstrate that the Upanishad doctrine of God is primarily philosophical, abstract and speculative.

Perhaps the simplest source from which to understand the Hindu worldview, including both the Vedic and the Upanishadic ideas, is George David's *Eclipse of a Person* (New Delhi: TRAC1, 1975).

12. William Stewart, *India's Religious Frontier* (London: SCM, 1964), pp. 97–99.

13. E. Stanley Jones, *The Christ of the Indian Road* (Lucknow: Lucknow Publishing House, 1964), p. 203.

14. As different elements of sacrifice developed (such as the reciting of the Vedic mantras, the pouring of the *ghee* [dehydrated butter] into the fire, pouring of the *soma* juice, the offering of the sacrificial victim and the like), each element developed its own *Brahmana*. Until A.D. 1875 *Brahmanas* were a part of *sruti*, revelation, equivalent in authority to the four *vedas*. But about this time Pandit Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of Arya Samaj, based the Hindu religion on nothing other than the *vedas*, and he attempted to devalue *Brahmanas* to the level of *smruthi* or tradition. Now they are officially part of *sruti*.

15. It is most significant that this word *dharma* also means religion in general — *e.g.* Christianity is referred to as Christian *Dharma*. What is more, it also means righteousness. *Dharma* is also the greatest of the three earthly goals for man: *Kama* (desire, including especially sexual desires), *Artha* (wealth) and *Dharma* (righteousness). This also explains why amongst Hindus there is no essential distinction between a holy person and a religious person, a spiritual person and a pious or godly person.

16. The *Gita* speaks of three kinds of spiritualities beyond duty, namely, that of gods, *asuras* and *rakshasas* (demons and devils). Of these the latter two lead to bondage and hence are to be discarded, while the first is the only one which leads to liberation from *samsara*, the wheel of re-birth in this world of *maya* or illusion. This is the true spirituality, and the *Gita* describes this true spirituality in terms reminiscent of Christian thought: 'The blessed Lord said fearlessness, purity of heart, steadfastness in knowledge and yoga, alms-giving, self-restraint and worship, study of one's scriptures, austerity, uprightness, harmlessness, truth, absence of anger, renunciation, serenity, absence of calumny, compassion to creatures, uncovetousness, gentleness, modesty, absence of fickleness, energy, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, absence of hatred, absence of pride. These belong to the first spirituality' (*Bhagavad Gita* XVI, 1–3).

17. The *Gita* also speaks of several *yogas — sankya yoga, karma yoga, gnana yoga, sanyasa yoga, dhyana yoga, abhyasa yoga,* and *bhakti yoga.*

18. Michael Von Bruck, 'Prayer-Yoga-Meditation: Ways to Experience', *Journal of Dharma* (1985), p. 288.

19. Since the key word *Brahman* and its derivatives constitute a very important part of Hindu religion, it is necessary to clarify its usage here. The history of the term shows six or seven phases of development. *Brahman* is derived either from the root word *Brah* (Panini) which means to grow, to increase, or from '*Brih*' or '*Vrih*' (Max Müller, Haug) which means to swell, to burst forth. From this root, *Brahman*, at this stage, meant the force of the will directed towards the gods (Roth). This was in the pre-Rigvedic Period (before 2000 B.C.). In the next stage during the early *Rigvedic* period (2000–1400 B.C.) the term came to mean anything that was, in a special manner, offered to the gods, or produced for them such as prayers, hymns, poems composed in honour of vedic gods. Thus, we read in *Rigveda*: 'O *Indra* who receivest the prayers (*Brahmani*) of the holy singers'; 'Victorious with men, hero in battles, *Indra*, who hearest the singer's supplications (*Brahmani*)'. In the later *Rigvedic* Period (1400–1000 B.C.) *Brahman* came to refer to the man who wrote the prayers or hymns. In line with this, the term also referred to the mysterious force, the power by which the prayers and sacred hymns became efficacious with gods. Once again, we read in *Rigveda*: 'We call King *Soma* to our aid, *Agni* with our songs and hymns (*Brahmani*). *Adityas, Vishnu, Surya* and the *Brahman* ("the priest") *Brahaspati.*'

In the next period of the *Brahmanas* (1000–800 B.C.) the term came to refer to very sacred or secret knowledge, the magic formula, the sacrifices and even the power of these sacrifices. Since, during the Brahmanic period, sacrifice was essential for every event, it was natural that the production of the world was also understood as the result of sacrifices. For the same reason the very detailed description of the rituals and the sacrifices were termed '*Brahmans*'. In the next Upanishadic or philosophical period (800–100 B.C.), the term underwent a colossal change. It came to refer to the mysterious underlying power that produces, pervades and upholds the totality of the universe, and which manifests itself primarily in the vegetative, animal, and rational forms of life. So we read, in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*: 'From this *Brahman* (soul) comes forth all vital energy, all world, all gods and all beings'; *Brahman* is '*the* real'. Next, during the *Puranic* period (600–800 A.D.) *Brahman* reaches its last stage of evolution, and comes to mean a personal god. By dropping the terminal 'n' it becomes *Brahma*, the creator of the universe. It is during this time that the word '*Trimurthy*' was coined, in which the absolute being was called *Brahma*, because he creates, and the two fighting deities supply the two other parts of this Hindu triad: *Vishnu* of the Aryans, because he pervades, *Shiva* of the Dravidians, because he destroys. Thus it was an attempt to gain status equal to that of *Vishnu* and *Shiva*, and so make peace between the fighting sects.

20. There are weighty reasons for doing so. Of the four parts of *sruti*, the Hindu revelation (namely, *Vedasanhita, Brahmanas, Aranyayas* and *Upanishads*), the *Upanishads*, being the creation of the philosophic Indo-Aryan thinkers, are metaphysical doctrines written in the form of dialogue. As such, as Motilal Pandit

demonstrates, they cannot contain praise, petition or worship. The Brahmanas, as already seen, are guide books for the performance of sacrificial rituals, containing mostly the physical details and explanations of rituals and sacrifices. They also have little to do with prayer. The *Aranyakas*, or the forest-books, written primarily for those who are retired in solitude, also contain thoughts and meditations on religious, mystical and philosophical aspects of the rituals. They contain some pious sayings of the sages concerning God, man and world, but specially deal with the symbolic and the spiritual aspects of sacrifices. Hence, if one wants to look at examples of prayer in Hindu revelation, one necessarily has to turn to the *Vedas*. Even here, it is the *Rigveda* which is primarily a collection of prayers. *Atharvaveda* consists of incantation and magical utterances to be used on different occasions. *Yajurveda* and *Samaveda* contain the details concerning the sacrifices. So whatever prayers are found in the *Vedas*, they are mostly repetitions from the *Rigveda*. *Rigveda* unquestionably occupies the first place among all the Hindu Scriptures as the fountain-head of all Hinduism, and even the fountain-head of all Indian culture. It is the most ancient and profound of Indian writings. It is the source of Indian religion, culture, philosophy, ethics, science, arts and spirituality. So it can be truly said that Hindu prayer basically originates from *Rigveda* alone.

21. A. C. Clayton, *The Rig-Vedas and Vedic Religion* (London & Madras: CLS, 1913), p. 138.
22. This is the reason why there is the worship of the *vak*, the speech. The word *Om*, which is called the *shabda Brahman* (god in verbal form) is the holiest of all the syllables and is supposed to be the creator of the universe. The *gayatri* mantra, taken from Rigveda III, 62:10, is the most holy prayer and the most sacred words of the whole veda, which every Brahman repeats every day. In the original, it runs: *ta Savitur Varenyam bhargo, devasya dimahi, dia vah nah prachodyat*; translated, 'May we attain the great glory of god, Savitar, who inspires our thoughts or works'. All Hindus believe that the recitation of the *gayatri* produces a glorious change in the mind and the body of the reciter.
23. A. J. Appasamy, *The Theology of Hindu Bhakti* (Madras: CLS, 1970), p. 1.
24. Many (such as Sadhu Chellappa, Zacharias) think that the personal devotion revealed in the earliest type of *Bhakti* is the result of the Christian gospel which had entered India in one way or other even as early as this!
25. Quoted by Appasamy, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
26. Ibid., p. 41.
27. Ibid., p. 71ff.
28. Ibid., p. 107.
29. Ibid., p. 118ff.
30. Stephen Neill, *Bhakti: Hindu and Christian* (Madras: CLS, 1974), p. 18.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 9

1. *CT* published an important treatment of this movement in an article entitled 'That New Age Religion' in its May 16, 1986 issue. Also cf. Norman Geisler, 'The New Age Movement', *BibSac* 144 (1987), pp. 79–104.
2. Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* was adapted to the thought of Zen Buddhism by Japanese philosopher K. Tsujimura in 1969.
3. Edward Conze, *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), p. 11.
4. Ibid., pp. 183–84.
5. John Hick, ed., *The Myth of God Incarnate* (London: SCM Press, 1977).
6. Athanasius, *De Incarnatione Verbi Dei*, sect. 4.
7. Ibid.

8. Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1973), p. 7.
9. Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo* 2:3.
10. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (London: Banner of Truth, repr. 1958), p. 449.
11. Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Harmondsworth, England: The Chaucer Press, 1972), p. 237.
12. Ibid., p. 260.
13. Ibid., p. 237.
14. The Unification Church teaches that the resurrection of Christ should be interpreted in a spiritual sense, not in a physical sense. And this spiritual dimension of the human being is always emphasised in its theology, which interprets the Eastern Orthodox notion of deification in terms of such a spiritual *identification* with God. Cf. Young Oon Kim, *Unification Theology* (New York: The Holy Spirit Association, 1980), pp. 63, 72. This general approach to understanding human 'spirituality', including some types of Buddhism, has already influenced Christian churches in the world. The Spiritual Counterfeits Project in Berkeley, California, has worked against this movement intellectually and practically by publishing and correspondence. Harold Bussell rightly describes the influence of this movement on Christians: 'When we as Evangelicals couple this phrase [viz. 'The Lord led me'] with a definition of spirituality based on frequency and fervour of devotions, quiet time, prayer, evangelism, and Bible study or on sheer subjective emotion, we are wide open to manipulation and deception by cults that define spirituality in similar terms' (*Unholy Devotion: Why Cults Lure Christians* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983], p. 30).
15. Lossky, *The Mystical*, p. 8.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 11

1. Constance Padwick, *Muslim Devotions* (London: SPCK, 1961), p. 108.
2. A.H. Johns, *Prayer, Spirituality and Mysticism in Islam* (Rome: Encounter, 1983), p. 5.
3. *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islām* (Lahore: Ashraf, 1971), p. 124.
4. Margaret Smith, *The Way of the Mystics* (London: Shaldon, 1976). M. Iqbāl, *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia* (Lahore: Ashraf. 1964), pp. 76ff. See the present writer's *Islām: A Christian Perspective* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1983), pp. 60ff.
5. See, for example, Maḥmūd M. Ayub, *A Muslim Appreciation of Christian Holiness* (Rome: Encounter, 1987).
6. *Op. cit.*, p. 92.
7. Ibid., p. 219.
8. Margaret Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 125ff.
9. Padwick, *op. cit.*, pp. 13ff.
10. *The Orthodox Church* (London: Pelican, 1973), pp. 74–75. Cf. Padwick, *op. cit.*, pp. 19f.
11. M. Iqbāl, *The Reconstruction*, pp. 192f.
12. R. C. Zaehner, *Mysticism: Sacred and Profane* (Oxford: University Press, 1957); *idem, Concordant-Discord.* (Oxford: University Press, 1970).
13. M. Nazir-Ali, *Islām: A Christian Perspective,* pp. 65f.
14. See further the present writer's *Frontiers in Muslim-Christian Encounter* (Oxford, Regnum, 1987), pp. 130ff.
15. Nazir-Ali, *Islam: A Christian Perspective,* pp. 84f.; Florence Antablin, *Christian Buildings in Muslim Lands* (unpublished paper).
16. Nazir-Ali, *Frontiers,* pp.77ff.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 12

1. Victor Sion, *Camino de Oración con Teresa de Lisieux* (Barcelona, Spain: Editorial Herder, 1985), p. 18.
2. Tulio Goffi and Bruno Secondin, *Problemas y Perspectives de Espiritualidad* (Salamanca, Spain: Ediciones Sígueme, 1986), p. 120.
3. Sion, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
4. Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* (St. Louis, Missouri: B. Herder Book Co., 1955), pp. 397.
5. Ibid., p. 321.
6. Segundo Galilea, *Teología de la Liberación, Ensayo de Sintesis* (Bogotá, Colombia: Indo-American Press Service, 1976), pp. 48–49.
7. Ibid, p. 53.
8. Frei Betto, 'La Oración: Una exigencia (también) política'. *Espiritualidad y Liberación en America Latina.* Several authors (San José, Costa Rica: Departamento Ecuménico de Investigaciones, 1982), pp. 16–20.
9. Walter M. Abbot, editor, *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Guild Press, 1966), p. 468, footnote 9.
10. John J. McEleney, 'Religious Life', ibid., p. 463.
11. 'Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life', ibid., paragraph 6
12. Ibid., paragraph 10.
13. Ignacio Larrañaga, *Encuentro, Manual de Oración* (Madrid, Spain: Ediciones Paulinas, 1984), pp. 76–78.
14. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Teología de la Liberación* (Madrid, Spain: Ediciones Sígueme, 1972), pp. 266–267.
15. Ibid., p. 270.
16. Ibid., p. 271.
17. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *We Drink from our own Wells* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985).
18. Juan Hernández Pico, 'La Oración en los Procesos Latinoamericanos de Liberación', in *Espiritualidad y Liberación en America Latina,* Eduardo Bonín, editor (San José, Costa Rica: Departamento Ecuménico de Investigaciones, 1982), p. 129.
19. Frei Betto, *op. cit.*, pp. 16–20.
20. Ibid., p. 21.
21. Ibid., p. 25.
22. Kevin and Dorothy Ranaghan, *Pentecostales Católicos* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1971), p. x.
23. Edward O'Connor, *The Pentecostal Movement in the Catholic Church* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1971), p. 251.
24. Ibid., p. 183.
25. Ibid., p. 132.
26. Michael Harper, *Three Sisters* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1979).
27. O'Connor, *op. cit.*, pp. 131–36.
28. Ibid., p. 134.
29. Ibid., p. 183.
30. Ibid., p. 197.
31. As quoted by Salvador Carrillo Alday in *Renovación Cristiana en el Espíritu Santo* (México: Instituto de Sagrada Escritura, 1975), pp. 127–30.
32. A. J. Gordon, *Protestant Saints* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1946), p.1.
33. Francisco La Cueva, *Espiritualidad Trinitaria* (Tarrasa, Barcelona: CLIE, 1983).
34. A. J. Gordon, 'Foreword', *David Brainerd: His Message for Today*, O. J. Smith, ed. (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1949).
35. Howard and Geraldine Taylor, *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret* (London: China Inland Mission, 1935), p. 12.

36. Vincent Taylor, *Evangelio Según San Marcos* (Madrid, Spain: Ediciones Sígueme, 1979), p. 207. Translated from *The Gospel According to Mark* (London: MacMillan, 1969).
37. Christian Lalive D'Epinay, *El Refugio de las Masas* (Santiago de Chile: Editorial del Pacifico, S.A., n.d.).
38. Howard and Geraldine Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 13

1. Cf. George Paik, *The History of Protestant Missions in Korea* (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1971), pp. 359–378; J. Edwin Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings in Eastern Asia* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), pp. 26–33.
2. Cf. Paik, *History*, pp. 367–368; Orr, *Awakenings*, pp. 26–30.
3. William Blair, *The Korean Pentecost* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977), pp.72ff.
4. Ibid., p. 75.
5. Ibid., p. 71.
6. Paik, *History*, p. 377.
7. Blair, *Korean Pentecost*, p. 25.
8. Orr, *Awakenings*, p. 53.
9. Ibid., p. 54.
10. Ibid., p. 111.
11. Cf. ibid., pp. 113f.
12. Cf. Chang Byung Il, 'The Life and Thought of the Rev. Kil Sun Ju', *Christian Thought* (December, 1966), pp. 68–75; Paik, *History*, pp. 373ff.
13. Cf. Kim Rin Suh, *The Martyrdom of Rev. Choo Kee Chul and His Preaching* (Pusan: Christian Life Publishing Co., 1958); Kim Choong Nam, *The Life of the Rev. Choo Ki Chul, the Martyr* (Seoul: Lily Press, 1978).
14. Min Kyung Bae, *The Rev. Choo Kee Chul, the Martyr* (Seoul: Korean Publishing Co., 1985), pp. 275–282.
15. Kim Rin Suh, *Martyrdom*, pp. 212–216.
16. Ahn Yong Choon, *The Atomic Bomb of Love* (Seoul: Sung Kwang Publishing Co., 1982); *idem. The Seed Must Die* (Chicago, Inter-Varsity Press, 1967).
17. Ah Yong Choon, *Bomb*, pp. 395f.
18. Originally prepared as a paper for the Consultation on the Work of the Holy Spirit and Evangelisation, held at Oslo, 28 May to 1 June, 1985.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 15

1. Eugene A. Nida, *Message and Mission* (South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1972), p. 10. Nida's full discussion in his first chapter, entitled 'Religion and Communication', amply illustrates this point.
2. Laurette Séjourné, *Pensamiento y Religión en el México Antiguo* [Burning Water] (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1964), p. 15.
3. Victor W. von Hagen, *El Imperio de los Incas* [Realm of the Incas] (México: Editorial Diana, 1974), p. 225.
4. Rufino Blanco-Fombona, *El Conquistador Español del Siglo XVI* (Madrid: Ediciones Nueva Raza, 1921), p. 18. Later on (p. 156), discussing the religious characteristics of these conquerors, he states that Balboa, 'upon discovering the South Sea [the Pacific Ocean] falls prostrate in thanksgiving to the Almighty . . . and being surrounded by his friends . . . he said to them . . . *Let us give thanks to God who has*

given us and guarded for us so much good and honour. Let us ask him to help us in his mercy and to guide us to conquer this land and new sea we have discovered, which no Christian has ever seen, in order to preach the holy Gospel in it'.

5. John A. Mackay has a chapter by this title in his book *El Otro Cristo Español* [The Other Spanish Christ] (México, Buenos/Aires, Casa Unida de Publicaciones, 1952), pp. 19–37. His chapter is divided into five major subheadings, in order to answer his own question: 'What were the great characteristics of that great people who converted South America into a projection of Iberia?' (a) Intense individuality, which is 'unique, simple, primitive'. (b) Predominance of passion, stating that this is 'over reason and will'. (c) An abstract sense of justice and a concrete sense of man. (d) Catholicity, with 'a passion for universality'. (e) An Iberian soul by nature, with 'a delirious thirst for power and a blind and simple loyalty'.

6. Ibid., pp. 118–119.

7. Ibid., p. 124.

8. The most common term for prayer among Latin American Roman Catholics is *rezar,* from the Latin *recitare.* Spanish language dictionaries seem to prefer this over *orar.* When they define the term they state that *rezar* is: 'To pray vocally pronouncing prayers used or approved by the [Roman Catholic] Church. To read or to say with attention the divine office [ritual] or the canonical hours.' *Diccionario Enciclopédico UTEHA*, Tomo VIII, P-Rob (México: UTEHA, 1952), p. 1251. In sharp contrast to this, Protestants in Latin America have always used the term *orar* (usually translated 'to pray') with a decidedly biblical connotation that endeavours to keep away from any mechanical repetition or ritualistic practice.

9. Or 'la fe del carbonero', which is expressed by the following dialogue: 'What do you believe?' a charcoal vendor is asked. And he answers: 'I believe that which the [Roman Catholic] Church believes.' 'And what does the Church believe?' 'The Church believes that which I believe', is the prompt answer. Mackay, *op. cit.*, mentions it on p. 107, but this is a very common expression throughout Latin America.

10. Latourette says: 'The Spanish mystics were not, as a rule, philosophical or even speculative. They were, rather, intent on the practical means of nourishing the life of the spirit and had uncanny insight into what would now be called psychology, with an analysis of the state of the soul.' Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953), p. 850.

11. Mackay, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

12. *Por Esta Cruz te Mataré* [For this Cross I'll Kill You] (Miami: Editorial Vida, 1973); p. 165.

13. Ibid., p. 166.

14. *They Dared to be Different* (Irvine, California: Harvest House Publishers, 1976), pp. 101ff.

15. Orlando Costas, 'La Realidad de la Iglesia Evangélica Latinoamericana', in *Fe Cristiana y Latinoamérica Hoy,* compiled by C. René Padilla (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Certeza, 1974), p. 39.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Gonzalo Báez-Camargo and Kenneth G. Grub, *Religion in the Republic of Mexico* (New York: World Dominion Press, 1935), p. 102.

19. From personal experience and numerous testimonies during my years in the pastorate of a large church in Mexico City. These have never been recorded, except for the publication of a small pamphlet of a very limited circulation, entitled *Memoria*, which I edited and published upon the completion of the remodelling of the building of 'El Divino Salvador' Presbyterian Church in 1964.

20. C. Peter Wagner, *Look Out! The Pentecostals are Coming* (Carol Stream: Creation House, 1973), p. 10.

21. Ibid.

22. I have had many people, even close relatives, pray that I would 'receive the

Holy Spirit' and speak in tongues, since I would be a much better and truer Christian leader because of this.

23. *Op cit.*, p. 126. He mentions 'Lalive', meaning author Christian Lalive d'Epinay, *Haven of the Masses* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1969). Wagner's note refers to pp. 197 and 204 of this work.

24. Ibid., pp. 135–136. Most of the material on this subject is from Harmon Johnson's 'Authority Over the Spirits: Brazilian Spiritism and Evangelical Church Growth' (unpublished M.A. thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1969).

25. George W. Peters, *Saturation Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), p. 55.

26. *Sacudiendo una Ciudad* (México: Cruzadas con Luis Palau, n.d.), pp. 89–90.

27. Ibid., p. 90.

28. 'Clamor por Venezuela: Ministerio de Oración de la Iglesia Evangélica de Venezuela,' a brochure published in Caracas, Venezuela, n.d.

29. Unsigned circular letter with the letterhead: 'Asamblea Nacional de Oración—Caracas, Venezuela, 24 de febrero al 1 de marzo, 1985'.

30. Personal letter from R. Allen Hatch, a missionary residing in Ecuador, and one of the members of the COMIBAM Executive Committee, Sept. 29, 1986.

31. 'COMIBAM Informa' (Guatemala: Boletín No. 4, abril, 1986), pp. 3–4.

32. 'Enlace Misionero', 5/3 (September, 1985) [Milpitas, California].

33. Wagner, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

34. Ibid., pp. 137–148.

35. Ibid., p. 148.

36. Roger S. Greenway, *An Urban Strategy for Latin America* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973), p. 46.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 16

1. A. Hastings, 'On African Theology', *SJT* 37 (1984), pp. 369–370, and H. E. W. Turner, *The Patristic Doctrine of Redemption* (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1952), p. 13, remind us that the *lex orandi* (law of prayer) always precedes the *lex credandi* (the law of faith). Hastings adds: 'In African Christianity prayer has certainly come well before theology. The worship and ministry of the local church may well be in practice the most powerful and consistent source in the shaping not, perhaps, of the rather limited field of academic theology but of popular and preached theology in Africa today' (p. 370).

2. F. Heiler, *Prayer: A Study in the History of Psychology of Religion* (tr. Samuel McComb, New York: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 362.

3. A. F. Walls, 'The Gospel as the Prisoner and Liberator of Culture', *ERT* (1983), p. 225.

4. F. Heiler, *Prayer*, 358. Italics in original.

5. A. J. Raboteau, 'African Diaspora', *PTR* 7 (1986), p. 118. See also P. Sarpong's comments on the 'this-world' outlook of African religions in 'African Theology and Worship', *The Ghana Bulletin of Theology*, 47 (December, 1974), p. 6. According to Sarpong, the African's 'prayers, whether addressed to the Supreme Being or to any of the two other categories of spirits, is almost always a litany of petitions for blessings or to ward off evils'.

6. E. Mveng, 'Structures fondamentales de la prière Négro-Africaine', *Personalité africaine et catholicisme* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1963), p. 158. I am aware that others disagree with Mveng. For example A. Shorter in his *Prayer in the Religious Traditions of Africa* (New York/Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1975) proposes six basic models of African prayer: strict theism, relative theism, symmetrical mediation, asymmetrical mediation, strict deism and relative deism (pp. 9–13). Such refinements,

interesting for analytical purposes, do not modify the triangular structure in a substantial way. See note 5, Sarpong's comments.

7. Ibid., pp. 158, 159, 160. It is not necessary, for our purposes, to deal with the identity of the object of worship in African prayers. For regardless of the object worshipped, Africans claim that the outcome of prayers depends on God. One need not therefore follow J. S. Mbiti when he estimates that ninety per cent of all the prayers are addressed to God (*The Prayers of African Religion* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1975), pp. 2, 14. Mbiti insists: 'When man prays, he prays directly, even if he may appeal simultaneously to both God and these other realities' (p. 12).

8. K. Amponsah, *Topics on West African Traditional Religion* (Cape Coast, 1975), vol. 2, *Religious Studies*, p. 38.

9. Ibid. The petitionary nature of traditional prayer has led people like E. Dammann to conclude that there is virtually no moral relationship between Africans and their objects of worship. This, claims Dammann, is why worship and praise are rare in Africa (E. Dammann, *Les religions de l'Afrique* [Paris: Payot, 1964], pp. 115–116).

10. E. I. Metuh, *African Religions in Western Conceptual Schemes: The Problems of Interpretation* (Ibadan: Pastoral Institute, 1985), p. 128. Igbo is spoken in Nigeria; Bambara (Jula), Bobo and Boomu are spoken in Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, and Burkina Faso.

11. D. O. Olayiwola, 'The Aladura: Its Strategies For Mission and Conversion in Yorubaland, Nigeria', *Orita* 21 (June, 1987), pp. 41, 43, claims that the Aladura practice of prayer is based on Yoruba religious views of 'compulsive prayer' which guarantees that the petition will be granted. This use of 'power and authority of prayer', he says, allows the Aladura to make more converts than the so-called mission churches.

12. J. S. Mbiti, *The Prayers of African Religion* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1975), pp. 2–3; A. Shorter, *Prayer in the Religious Traditions of Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 23.

13. D. Ndofunsu, 'The Role of Prayer in the Kimbanguist Church', in *Christianity in Independent Africa,* ed. E. W. Fasholé-Luke, *et al.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), p. 589.

14. Heiler, *Prayer*, p. 362.

15. E. H. Peterson, *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), pp. 28–29.

16. E. K. Sievers, 'Christian Prayer in an African Setting', *The Ghana Bulletin of Theology* 46 (June, 1974), p. 44, says: 'I think I can say without exaggeration: Many African Christians have inherited from Western Christianity a very deep seated individualism.'

17. R. Clapp, 'Eugene Peterson: A Monk Out of Habit', *CT* 3 (April, 1987), p. 27.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 17
(All books published in London unless specified.)

1. *A Simple Way to Pray,* in *Works,* 43, pp. 193–194.

2. *The Reformation in Germany,* trans. by R. Walls, 2 vols., 1968, I, p. 434.

3. *Dogmengeschichte* (Zurich, 1951), p. 430, quoted in G. Rupp, 'The Protestant Spirituality in the First Age of the Reformation' (hereafter 'Protestant Spirituality'), in *Popular Belief and Practice* (hereafter *Popular Belief*), Vol. 8 of *Studies in Church History,* ed. by D. Baker and G. J. Cuming, 1972, p. 160.

4. G. P. Wiles, *Paul's Intercessory Prayers,* Cambridge, 1974, p. IX.

5. *A History of Christian Spirituality*, III, p. 142. Bouyer discusses Puritan spirituality on pp. 134–60.

6. See J. A. Newton, *Methodism and the Puritans*, The Dr William's Trust, 1964.
7. See L. E. Elliot-Binns' *The Early Evangelicals*, 1953, p. 98. Elliot-Binns also observes that the Evangelicals openly acknowledged this spiritual affinity with and dependence on the Puritans (pp. 120–21, and 214–16).
8. See F. E. Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (hereafter *Rise of Pietism*), Leiden, 1965, pp. 24–108, 117–21, 127–41.
9. *The Character of an Old English Puritane, or Non-Conformist* (hereafter *Character of Puritane*), pp. 1–2.
10. Question and answer number one of the *Longer* (hereafter *L.C.*) and *Shorter* (hereafter *S.C.*) *Catechisms*. References are by number.
11. 'How may the Duty of Family Prayer be best managed . . .' (hereafter 'Family Prayer'), in *The Morning Exercise at Cripple-Gate*, ed. by Samuel Annesley, 2nd. edit., 1676, p. 300.
12. *A Helpe unto Devotion* (hereafter *A Helpe*), unpaginated Epistle Dedicatory.
13. 'Pastoral Care of the Prophet', in *John Calvin: Contemporary Prophet*, ed. by Jacob T. Hoogstra, Grand Rapids, 1959, p. 51.
14. *E.g.* in his *Cases of Conscience* (1639), William Ames is aware that he is part of a movement which is breaking new ground. He explains that this is inevitable because the earlier Protestants were 'necessarily enforced to fight always in the front against the enemies to defend the faith, and . . . they could not plant and water the fields and vineyards as they desired' ('To the reader').
15. *A Christian Directory* (hereafter *C.D.*) in *Works*, 1707, I, p. 718.
16. *A Guide to Godlynesse*, 'The Epistle Dedicatory'.
17. In *Works*, VII, pp. 65–78.
18. Ibid., II, pp. 213–48.
19. In *Works*, III, P. 118.
20. *According to John*, 1968, p. 109.
21. *God in Christian Thought and Experience*, 1939, p. 35.
22. *The Evangelical Faith*, I, Eng. trans., Grand Rapids, 1974, p. 112.
23. A. F. Mitchell notes the high calibre of biblical expertise of the Westminster Divines and observes that this kept them from 'that system of spiritualising the text which had been too much countenanced by some of the most eminent of the Fathers, and many of the best of the mystics' (*Minutes . . . of the Westminster Assembly of Divines*, 1874, pp. xli–li).
24. *Cf. e.g.* T. W. Manson, 'The Lord's Prayer', in *BJRL* 38 (1955–56), with William Gouge, *A Guide to Goe to God*, 1626.
25. *A Discourse of the Knowledge of God*, in *Works*, Edinburgh, 1864–66, IV, p. 6.
26. *S.C.*, 100: cf. Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, trans. by J. Bowden, 1971, I, p. 127.
27. *S.C.*, 98.
28. J. Burnaby, 'Christian Prayer', in *Soundings*, ed. by A. R. Vidler, 1962, p. 223.
29. 'The Spiritual Favourite at the Throne of Grace' (hereafter 'Spiritual Favourite') in *Works*, Edinburgh, 1862–64, VI, pp. 95–96.
30. *The Beauty of Magistracy*, in the *Works* of George Swinnock, IV, pp. 292–93.
31. In Calvin's *Commentaries*, 10, p. 333.
32. *Bible and Gospel*, p. 69.
33. William Gouge, *A Guide to Goe to God* (hereafter *A Guide*), 1626, p. 105.
34. *A Body of Divinitie* (hereafter *B.D.*), pp. 350, 358.
35. Ibid.
36. *The Lord's Prayer*, in *Works*, 1870–71, I, pp. 66–67.
37. *The Lord's Prayer*, in *Works*, I, p. 335.
38. *A Guide*, p. 41.
39. *The Lord's Prayer*, in *Works*, 1617–26, I, pp. 73–74.
40. *C.D.* in *Works*, I, p. 61.
41. F. Ernest Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, p. 36.

42. Ibid., p. 41.
43. Ibid., pp. 46, 47.
44. *A . . . Exposition . . . of Jude,* in *Works,* XIV, p. 579.
45. *Sermons Upon Romans VIII* (hereafter *Romans*), in *Works,* XII, p. 232.
46. *The Christian in Complete Armour* (hereafter *Armour*), 1864, II, p. 467.
47. *Romans,* in *Works,* XII, p. 236.
48. *Armour,* II, p. 486.
49. *C.D.,* in *Works,* I, pp. 711–12.
50. Ibid.
51. 182.
52. *Romans,* in *Works,* XII, p. 234.
53. *Armour,* II, pp. 488–89.
54. *The Treatises of Cyprian,* in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers,* 1864, V, pp. 455–56.
55. p. 170.
56. *The Privy Key of Heaven* (hereafter *Privy Key*), in *Works,* II, p. 263.
57. *The Zealous Christian,* 1654, pp. 42–43.
58. Ibid., p. 53.
59. *The Saints Daily Exercise* (hereafter *Daily Exercise*), in *Works,* 1648, p. 841.
60. *The Zealous Christian,* 1654, p. 55.
61. *Daily Exercise,* in *Works,* pp. 841–42.
62. *Privy Key,* in *Works,* II, pp. 258–59.
63. Ibid.
64. *Prayer,* 1932, p. 17.
65. Ibid., p. 124.
66. *A Guide to Goe to God,* 1626, p. 57.
67. *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience,* Oxford, 1946, p. 21.
68. *Rise of Pietism,* pp. 6–7.
69. *A Guide to Godlyness,* 1622, 'Epistle Dedicatory'.
70. See 'Puritan and Quaker Mysticism', in *Theol* 78 (1975), pp. 518–531.
71. *Closet-Prayer a Christian Duty,* 1687, pp. 26–27.
72. *Prayer,* p. 106.
73. *Forty Six Sermons upon . . . Romans,* 1674, pp. 434–35.
74. 'The Puritan Piety . . . of the Long Parliament', in *Popular Belief,* ed. by G. J. Cuming and D. Baker, p. 184.
75. Ibid., p. 191.
76. *Reliquiae Baxterianae,* 1696, Book I, part 1, p. 85.
77. Quoted in Edmund Calamy, *The Nonconformist's Memorial,* ed. by S. Palmer, 1802, I, p. 5.
78. *A History of the Cure of Souls,* 1951, p. 263.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 18

1. Cited from 'Harvest Today', by *Interaction.* House Organ of CBFMS (Summer, 1980), p. 2.
2. T. W. Engstrom, *The Making of a Christian Leader* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), pp. 118–119.
3. T. W. Engstrom, R. Alec Mackenzie, *Managing Your Time* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1974), pp. 81–89. Admittedly, the third condition would have to be considerably revamped or re-interpreted to fit *any* Christian organisation!
4. Cf. Peter Drucker, *The Effective Executive* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966); *idem., An Introductory View of Management* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977); *idem., Management Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices* (New York: Harper and

Row, 1974); Olan Hendrix, *Management for the Christian Worker* (Libertyville, Ill. 1976); Michael Maccoby, *The Leader* (New York, 1981), pp. 219–137.

5. Cited from Andrew Bonar in *Gathered Gold,* ed. John Blanchard (Welwyn: Evangelical Press, 1984), pp. 241–242.

6. Cited in E. M. Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer* (Chicago: Moody, n.d.), p. 36.

7. J. O. Sanders, *A Spiritual Clinic* (Chicago: Moody, n.d.), p. 122.

8. John Piper, *Desiring God* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1986), pp. 135, 136.

9. LeRoy Eims, *Keeping Off the Casualty List* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1986), *passim*.

10. E. M. Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer,* p. 38.

11. G. Granger Fleming, *The Dynamic of All-Prayer* (Chicago: Moody n.d.), p. 52.

12. J. O. Sanders, *A Spiritual Clinic,* p. 88.

13. J. Piper, pp. 132, 133.

14. W. with R. Myers, *Pray* (Col. Springs: Navpress, 1983), pp. 15–23.

15. S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Prayer*, pp. 158, 224–25, cited in W. and R. Myers, p. 33.

16. C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch, 1963), p. 60, in W. and R. Myers, p. 30.

17. Wesley C. Duewel, *Touch the World Through Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), p. 40.

18. A. E. C. Brooks, *Answers to Prayer from George Muller's Narratives* (Chicago: Moody, n.d.), p. 6.

19. Some concepts in this paragraph were heard in a Missionary Information Bureau President's Roundtable in Serra Negra, Brazil, from John MacArthur.

20. T. W. Engstrom, *The Making of a Christian Leader,* p. 64; J. O. Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Chicago: Moody, 1967), pp. 21, 22.

21. T. W. Engstrom, *The Making*, p. 74.

22. H. P. Shedd, 'Teamwork', *Quarterly of the Gospel Mission of S.A.* (2nd Quarter; Ft. Lauderdale, 1986), p. 3.

23. *Cf.* Duewel, pp. 131, 132.

24. J. O. Sanders, *A Spiritual Clinic,* p. 89.

25. Ibid., p. 103.

26. Reported by David Adeney in a session of the Church and Faith study unit of the Theology Commission of W.E.F. in Cambridge, England, 1986.

27. Cf. J. O. Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership,* p. 50.

28. E. M. Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer,* p. 65.

29. Ibid., p. 52.

30. Cf. C. Colson, *Loving God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), pp. 45ff.

31. Alice Poynor, *From the Campus to the World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1986), pp. 111, 112.

32. W. Webster, *Impact Magazine,* CBFMS (Wheaton: Aug. 1986), p. 4.

33. Trusting children of so powerful and generous a Father need never worry over his care. The more common understanding that this petition is only for daily physical bread is not well supported in the context of Matthew 6. God feeds the birds and clothes the flowers. How much more can he be counted upon to supply the needs of his loved ones, including spiritual bread. Cf. discussion in H. B. Green. *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 90f.

34. Cf. the illustration in C. Colson, *Loving God*, pp. 30–33.

35. K. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), pp. 119–133.

36. R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII–XXI* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1970), p. 763.

37. Ibid., p. 767; W. L. Duewel, pp. 40, 41.

38. O. Hallesby, *Prayer*, p. 105, in W. and R. Myers, p. 42.

39. S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Prayer*, p. 12, in Myers, p. xviii.

40. H. Lindsell, *When You Pray* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1969), p. 19.

41. W. L. Duewel, p. 45.
42. W. and R. Myers, p. xvi.
43. Ibid., p. xvii.
44. Cf. J. O. Fraser's note on prayer of resistance in J. O. Sander, *A Spiritual Clinic,* p. 113.
45. Cf. David C. Fisher, 'Pulpit Prayers', *Leadership* 7/2 (1986), pp. 22, 23.
46. Cited in E. M. Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer*, p. 10.
47. Ibid., p. 16.
48. C. Colson, *Loving God,* p. 180.
49. In E. M. Bounds, *Purpose*, p. 49.
50. Ibid., p. 40.
51. In H. Lindsell, *When You Pray,* p. 13.
52. E. M. Bounds, p. 52.
53. David Peterson, 'Further Reflections on Worship in the New Testament', *RTR* 44 (1985), p. 40.
54. Cited in Bounds, p. 25.
55. E. M. Bounds, pp. 65, 83.
56. *Into All the World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1943), p. 160, in J. O. Sanders, *Prayer Power Unlimited* (Chicago: Moody, 1977), p. 53.
57. In E. M. Bounds, p. 60. Cried Martyn when he finally reached India: 'Now let me burn out for God.' In the seven short years that God spared him, he translated the New Testament into three languages. Cf. J. O. Sanders, *A Spiritual Clinic,* pp. 123–124.
58. D. Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (tr. J. W. Doberstein; New York: Harper and Row, 1954), p. 63.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 19

1. C. S. Lewis, *Poems* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), p. 122.
2. 'People are always thinking that conduct is supremely important, and that prayer helps it, therefore prayer is good. That is true as far as it goes; still truer is it to say that worship is of supreme importance and conduct tests it.' — William Temple, *Christian Faith and Life* (London: SCM, 1931), p. 19.
3. *Life Together* (London: SCM, 1954).
4. *The Preces Privatae of Lancelot Andrewes*, Ed. A. E. Burn (trans. F. E. Brightman; London: Methuen, 1920).
5. *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions,* ed. Arthur Bennett (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1975).
6. Basilea Schlink, *Praying our way through life* (Lakeland, n.d.).
7. C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1964).
8. 'When Archbishop Michael Ramsey was asked how long he prayed for at a time, he replied: "About a minute, but it takes me 29 minutes to get there" ' (the Bishop of Peterborough, writing in *Cross Keys*, the Peterborough Diocesan News, March, 1987).

NOTES ON CHAPTER 20

1. Cf. Leslie Lyall, *Three of China's Mighty Men* (London: Overseas Missionary Fellowship Books, 1973), pp. 29–30.
2. *Life Together* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), p. 63.

3. *The Prayer That Spans the World* (ET London: James Clarke, 1960).
4. Cf. also Ezek. 20:9: 'But for the sake of my name I did what would keep it from being profaned in the eyes of the nations they lived among . . .'
5. Quoted by Helmut Thielicke, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
6. Ibid., p. 45.

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